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ABSTRACT

This volume consists of four issues. Issue 1 looks at some recent research on practice and is composed of these articles: "Reflection on Literacy," a summary of the World Conference on Literacy; "How Effective Is Adult Literacy Education?" that reports outcomes of Ontario Literacy Coalition studies; "UK Trends: Assessing Basic Skills at Work and Workplace Training for Non-Managers," summaries of two UK reports; "'Adcult' [sic] and Visual Literacy: Students as Beachcombers" (R. Scott Lamascus) on advertising in the writing classroom; descriptions of resources on participatory research and practice; and descriptions of educational technology. Issue 2, which looks at issues of women as learners, contains the following: "Women and Literacy"; "The Persisting Power and Costs of the Literacy Myth" (Harvey J. Graff), a comment on Literacy, Economy, and Society; "Women and Work" with classroom activities; "What Is a Feminist Curriculum?" (Kate Nonesuch); "A Feminist Perspective on Literacy Curriculum" (Fran Davis); and "Profiles of ABE [Adult Basic Education] Students: A Provincial Study." Issue 3, on social consequences of literacy, contains the following: "Social Literacies"; "The Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative" (Bob Bickerton); "Scar-y Stories and Poems" (Francis Kazemek); "Literacy, Economy, and Society: Results of the First International Adult Education Survey (IALS)" (Brian V. Street); and "Measuring Outcomes in Volunteer Programs." Issue 4, on the complexities of literacy, includes these articles: "Visions of Literacy"; "Two Different Theoretical Approaches to Literacy and Their Implication for Adult Literacy Programs"; "Computers as Cognitive Tools"; "Double Duty Dollars: Investing in Adult Education" (Thomas G. Sticht); and "IALS: Ending the Myth of the 'Literacy Myth'" (Stan Jones). Each issue also contains "To Ponder," which provides several short pieces on various topics; book reviews; list of conferences; and announcements. Issues 1, 2, and 4 also contain a supplement, Media Focus," which focus on: "Teaching with Motion Pictures"; "Traditional versus New Television"; and "The Morphing of Media Literacy." (YLB)

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Literacy across the Curriculum
Volume 12
1996-1997

Linda Shohet, Editor

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SPRING 1996 Vol. 12 No. 1

Literacy across the curriculum

Including Media Focus

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

REFLECTIONS on literacy

Transfer of knowledge and technology has traditionally moved from the West to developing nations, on the premise that "we" know what "they" need. But when it comes to literacy, (and perhaps by extension to other issues as well), we have much to learn from the developing nations.

The most obvious is a lesson in humility. Against our constant grumblings about dwindling funds and inadequate technology, it is chastening to hear that in a village without electricity, finding paper and pencils is a challenge. A more pertinent lesson can be extracted from a common worldwide preoccupation with outcomes of literacy programs.

> A recent World Bank Discussion Paper (Abadzi 1994)... [r]eviewing adult literacy programmes worldwide over the past thirty years, estimates that for every 100 learners who joined classes, on average only 12 of them actually learnt to read and write. Moreover, adult literacy programmes have, in general, failed to link literacy to wider development. *(Archer & Cottingham, ODA report, 4)*

A sense of the disillusion was palpable at the World Conference on Literacy held in Philadelphia in March. Despite the optimistic spin given by UNESCO speakers in their opening comments, most international presenters gave sobering accounts of their experiences. Nowhere was the problem reflected more clearly than in some of the South African sessions.

In relation to literacy, South Africa today mirrors both the developed and developing worlds. As part of its attempt to redress the ravages of apartheid, the country is committed to making its black population literate enough to manage a high tech society —hence the appeal of workplace literacy models borrowed from the US, UK, Canada and Australia.

Disjunction in the workplace

One such initiative was described in the context of a workplace literacy program that is fostering community development. It has been implemented at Umgeni Water in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The second-largest water authority in South Africa, Umgeni controls 9000 sq. miles and is responsible for dams and water purification. It has recently developed a Rural Areas Water and Sanitation Plan to get

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Literacy across the curriculum

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Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

potable water to rural areas by the year 2005. The problem, according to presenter Sally Frost, is that "community water committees lack the technical and managerial skills and confidence to effectively manage the water supply after Umgeni withdraws." Umgeni has decided that a workplace literacy program could be the answer.

Describing the program begun in 1993, Ms. Frost cites a rise in functional literacy among 540 employees from 3% (1993) to 15% (1996). The internal program has helped local development by using the skills of their Adult Education Department to support the community —with needs analyses, literacy screening, facilitation, training and classes. They stress life skills — committee skills, problem-solving, decision-making and more.

Listening to the description of the model, I could have been in a North American plant. The only signal that I was not came from the accompanying slides of brightly dressed villagers balancing water jugs on their heads. Ms. Frost betrayed no sense of irony about presenting immediately after Cape Town sociologist Mastin Prinsloo, who had just described an ethnographic study of adult literacy provision in South Africa which found that most programs have failed and that there is a disjunction between what policy makers have expected and what has actually happened.

Ignoring what people know

Prinsloo found that most literacy provision being offered in night schools did not match what people did in daily life, and that adult education in general was being constructed as entry into job training. In setting up qualification frameworks and reconstruction programs, policy makers have turned to borrowed models, making assumptions about cultural and cognitive deficits and ignoring the specific contexts of their own country.

For example, Prinsloo points out that for migrant workers, apart from the inaccessibility of schooling, there was often also an anti-schooling bias: leaving school early was equated with becoming a man. School was seen as a place for women and children. But unschooled people can be self-taught and many organizers without schooling during apartheid were drawing on other skills to become powerful mediators. Now these sophisticated people are being reconstructed as infants in adult literacy night classes. The models ignore what people already know.

Khetsi Lehoko, an education Department official responsible for South Africa's adult provision, also took issue with the image of ignorant water-carriers conveyed by the Umgeni slides and reinforced Prinsloo's picture of many people who cannot read or write yet are politically literate. He also noted that saying you cannot read or write can be a camouflage in threatening times. He spoke of the challenges facing the country — of trying to turn small-scale to large-scale provision. Defending the system of qualifications and standards being set, he sees it as part of an integrated approach, and speaks of developing a separate cadre of adult educators and of transforming the infrastructure of the night schools.

Building on what people know

The possibility of building practice on community needs was

exemplified in a promising approach presented in another session at the conference. REFLECT(for Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques), has been developed and pilot-tested by ACTION-AID, a UK-based international development organization.

Fusing the theory of Freire and the practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal, REFLECT starts from a probing historical and philosophical analysis of literacy and the weaknesses of current practice (see TO PONDER). In a REFLECT program, there are no printed "primers." The only printed matter is a manual for facilitators (See REVIEWS) which guides them in helping community literacy circles develop their own learning materials by constructing "graphics — "maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams that represent local reality, systematize the existing knowledge of participants and promote detailed analysis of local issues."

Pilot-projects in Uganda, Bangladesh and El Salvador since 1993 have been monitored and evaluated in depth. The evaluation process has been scrupulous, a model of what "outcomes-based" might look like at its best. These projects have all been rural, but the practitioners are calling for new research sites — in urban areas, in the developed world, in specific settings— to determine what aspects of this practice might be tranferrable.

Canadian contexts

What can any of this tell us in Canada? Our problems shrink in comparison to those described, yet remain troubling within our own context. However, we are also beginning to examine our assumptions and practices, and often find them wanting. The Ontario Literacy Coalition has recently published a background paper on outcomes-based evaluation (see p.5). The odd juxtapositions in South Africa can serve as a foil to highlight some questions; the REFLECT analysis and practice can offer some alternative models of instruction and evaluation.

What are the outcomes *we* expect from literacy programs? What definition of literacy lies behind the expectations? Whose needs are being met? How often do we begin from what people know, need and want, and how often do we assume they know nothing?

Ending with hope

Paolo Freire, frail but still inspired, was the keynote speaker in Philadelphia. Despite the pervasive pessimism at the conference, he invoked a philosophy of hope. "Education today," he said, "has to be a critical process, a struggle against fatalism... Change is difficult, but change is possible."

We must all believe that at some level, or we would not still be working in literacy.

This issue of *LAC* looks at some recent research on practice -- in Ontario, the UK, and in developing countries.

It examines some approaches that have been found effective in specific contexts, and does several takes on the role of the visual in both "old" and "new" literacies. [LS]

Recommended reading:
David Archer & Sara Cottingham, *Action Research Report on REFLECT, Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques*, Overseas Development Administration, Serial No 17, March 1996.

Visual literacy and development work

Much work has been done by Andreas Fuglesang (1982), UNICEF Nepal and others (See Murray Bradley 1994)— exploring people's abilities to read and interpret pictures. In development work we take a lot for granted. We assume that people can understand the posters and leaflets we produce if we use lots of pictures instead of words. The images we use seem obvious to us. However they are often not clear to people with little exposure to seeing two dimensional visual images and who are unfamiliar with their conventions. Photos are often too cluttered. Line drawings and cartoons are full of conventions whether speech bubbles, arrows or other symbols.

As a result of these analyses some work has been done on how to deliver development communications most effectively — how to make pictures easily recognisable or "readable" to people with little exposure to two-dimensional visual images. However, no concerted attempt has been made to develop a programme which will in the process help to make people visually literate.

Archer & Cottingham, *REFLECT Mother Manual*, p.15.
See REVIEWS, p.9.

Suzanne Ziegler, *The Effectiveness of Adult Literacy Evaluation: A Review of Issues and Literature Related to Outcome-Based Evaluation of Literacy Programs*, Ontario Literacy Coalition, 1996.

1 On writing as visual communication

Writing itself is of course also a form of visual communication. Indeed, and paradoxically, the sign of the fully literate social person is the ability to treat writing completely as a visual medium — for instance, not moving one's lips and not vocalizing when one is reading, not even 'subvocalizing' (a silent 'speaking aloud in the head,' to bring out the full paradox of this activity). Readers who move their lips when reading, who subvocalize, are regarded as still tainted with the culturally less advanced mode of spoken language. This kind of visual literacy (the 'old' visual literacy) has, for centuries now, been one of the most essential achievements and values of Western culture, and one of the most essential goals of education, so much so that one major and heavily value-laden distinction made by Western cultures has been that between literate (advanced) and non-literate (oral and primitive) cultures. No wonder that the move towards a new literacy, based on images and visual design, can come to be seen as a threat, a sign of the decline of culture, and hence a particularly potent symbol and rallying point for conservative and even reactionary social groupings.

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, Routledge, London, New York, 1996, p. 15.

2 On claims about literacy

From the past literature on adult literacy one would be excused for thinking that literacy is a "wonderdrug." With a simple dose of literacy adults develop logical abilities, become politically aware, organise to solve their problems and increase their productivity. As a result of this miracle cure, women are empowered, the rate of population growth is reduced, immunisation coverage is increased, infant mortality declines, community organisations are strengthened, countries become modernised and governments become more accountable and democratic.
...In recent years these claims have been increasingly challenged and many myths have been exploded.

David Archer & Sara Cottingham, *Action Research Report on REFLECT, Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques*, Overseas Development Administration, Serial No 17, March 1996, p.1.

3 On alphabets and goddesses

A Goddess, not a God, was usually credited with the invention of alphabetical letters. All letters were originally sacred symbols — the literal meaning of *hieroglyph*. In Egypt the art of writing was the gift of the Goddess Isis, Maat, Menos, or Seshat; in Rome, that of the Goddess Carmenta or the Fata Scribunda (writer-Fate); in Scandinavia, that of the Norns as *Schreiberinnen*, "writing-women." in Babylon, that of Gulses or Fates.

Written letters were symbols of Logos power, that is, the power to create the world by means of words. That is why the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet appeared on the necklace of skulls worn by Kali Ma, perhaps the oldest Goddess of creation. These letters were *matrika*, "the mothers," which brought all things into being when Kali formed them into words.

Barbara G. Walker, "Alphabet," *The Women's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1988, p.117.

How effective is adult literacy education?
Ontario Literacy Coalition studies outcomes

Most Canadian literacy practitioners bridle at the phrase "outcome-based evaluation." Perhaps this is because we have been conditioned to believe that the outcomes of adult literacy programs cannot be measured by traditional standardized tests, or because most of us have not been trained to implement effective evaluation. Or perhaps it is because we have recently seen the phrase "outcome-based" wielded by conservative North American politicians and taxpayers when eliminating large chunks of education funding, with adult education one of the most frequent targets.

Regardless of the unease in the field, the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) has recognized that the demand for accountability is increasing, that public sector funding is shrinking and that the survival of adult literacy work is going to depend to some extent on the ability of the field to influence the criteria used to decide which programs will be maintained.

To support both their own advocacy role and field development, the OLC commissioned researcher Dr. Suzanne Ziegler to prepare a report that was released in February 1996. It is entitled *The Effectiveness of Adult Literacy Evaluation: A Review of Issues and Literature Related to Outcome-Based Evaluation of Literacy Programs.*

Divided into three parts, the report discusses the need for assessing program outcomes, reviews the literature on variables affecting outcomes of literacy programs, and offers some conclusions and recommendations.

What we do know and what we don't

The research on this topic is mainly American, and Ziegler draws heavily on the recent US National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (NEAEP). In keeping with current trends, she includes second-language learners as part of the potential clientele for literacy, acknowledging that different methods and approaches may be required for different segments of the population. Since most Canadian provinces have separate funding for literacy and ESL, this report could seed some rethinking about this issue.

Ziegler finds that, for many reasons, there are more questions than answers in the literature. In examining the need for better evaluation, she begins with "the consequences of not knowing" [BOX 1].

There are, however, hints about what does work and about what we should be examining further. In the conclusions and recommendations, Ziegler offers a few generalizations supported by findings to date:

- Literacy instruction does promote literacy acquisition, but the number of learners who are unsuccessful for whatever reasons, including absenteeism, is high.
- It is probably impossible for a learner to significantly increase her/his literacy skills without a substantial investment of time, amounting to at least 50 hours in the best case and over 200 for ESL learners in general literacy classes.
- The best way to maximize learning time is to extend it, through out-of-class practice, which is most likely to occur if the instruction is keyed to materials and situations which the client encounters daily and needs to master; this is probably also a best strategy for preventing forgetting.
- The most effective instructional methods and learning environments are likely different for different kinds of learners (ABE, ESL, ASE).
- Offering allied services, such as counselling, which clients use, will likely help maintain their attendance.

An old definition

The list of what we do not know is much longer. But we will never have

BOX 1

The consequences of not knowing

The consequences of not having reliable program outcome data at the local program level are that teachers and tutors are left with no alternative but to operate on the basis of what they feel they know about what works. They may ask learners what strategies work best for them, or feel most comfortable to them. They will observe, anecdotally, which sessions seem to be most productive, and may alter their methods based on their observations. And they may consult with their peers, who in turn will offer advice based on their own personal experiences and hunches. Reflection on personal experience and intuition are undeniably important data sources; nonetheless, practitioners also need empirical information about what works best, in order to help them make decisions about what approaches they will use.

The lack of outcome data also makes it more difficult to communicate about the value of their effort to funders or the larger public, in a way that is convincing. While there may be little doubt in the public mind that literacy is important, there is often considerable doubt whether particular programs are successful in increasing literacy, or in doing so with a reasonable degree of efficiency. (Ziegler, 5-6)

the answers, Ziegler suggests, until we begin to ask the same questions of all programs. She does, however, rely on a narrow definition of literacy as the reading and writing of print, and ignores the connections of literacy to culture and to power structures.

In stressing that the primary function of literacy programs is to increase adults' reading and writing skills, Ziegler is able to reduce the quest to two central questions: What are the best ways to help adults become literate, and what is the evidence? [See BOX 2]

While this return to a definition of literacy as basic skills seems to simplify the debate, it ignores the changing nature of literacy and the diverse needs of learners, including those who cannot learn to read and write. It also works against the broadened definition now being promoted through the international survey (IALS)

Susan Sussman, Executive Director of the Ontario Literacy Coalition, notes in the Preface that while the positions of the author are not necessarily those of the OLC, their intention was to "stimulate thought and discussion." The need for these discussions is not limited to Ontario, but the terms of the discussion have to be broadened. There are other kinds of research being conducted about the outcomes of literacy programs (See REFLECT p 9) which also suggest that traditional approaches do not have the outcomes long claimed.

Given current trends favouring economic outcomes, many funders might be reluctant to support non-traditional approaches. Then literacy practitioners would have to find convincing arguments to widen the range of acceptable outcomes.

A copy of *The Effectiveness of Adult Literacy Evaluation: A Review of Issues and Literature Related to Outcome-Based Evaluation of Literacy Programs.* can be ordered from the Ontario Literacy Coalition, 365 Bloor Street East, #1003,, Toronto, ON, Canada M4W 3L4 Tel: (416) 963-5787; Fax: (416) 961-8138.

BOX 2

Goals of adult literacy programs

There are an extraordinary number of goals and achievements of adult literacy programs. They can and do alter self-concept, create helping networks, reduce absenteeism, and equip people for better jobs. But if they do not also improve reading and writing skills, they fail to meet their essential mandate. If improved self-concept or networking or attendance or job qualification were the only or the principal goal of a program, it is not inevitable or even clear that literacy instruction would be the most efficient means. An interesting case in point is work with prison populations (Ross, Fabiano & Ross, 1988) which strongly suggests that very important cognitive development goals can be met without literacy instruction (and presumably without literacy increases, though they were not measured), in a low literate population. (Ziegler, 43)

UK TRENDS

Assessing Basic Skills at Work & Workplace training for non-managers

Two recent reports from the UK, one from the Basic Skills Agency and one from WORKBASE Training indicate some trends.

In 1992, the Basic Skills Agency (formerly the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit) initiated 40 pilot-projects as the second stage of a three-year program called Basic Skills at Work. These projects followed an earlier stage of research which showed that the need for basic skills in the UK was rising but that most provision did not address either the needs of the workplace or of particular jobs.

The 40 projects were developed over four years. While most involved partnerships with local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), a few were directly involved with companies. The agency developed a set of 8 criteria to judge the effectiveness of the projects and provide some indicators of success. [See BOX]. The evaluation was carried out by an independent consultant affiliated with the University of Birmingham.

Beside the analysis of numbers of learners reached and of impact, the report provides someadditional insights. They concluded that the most serious barrier to developing this training is lack of employer awareness of its need and/or effectiveness, and that raising awareness is a continuing

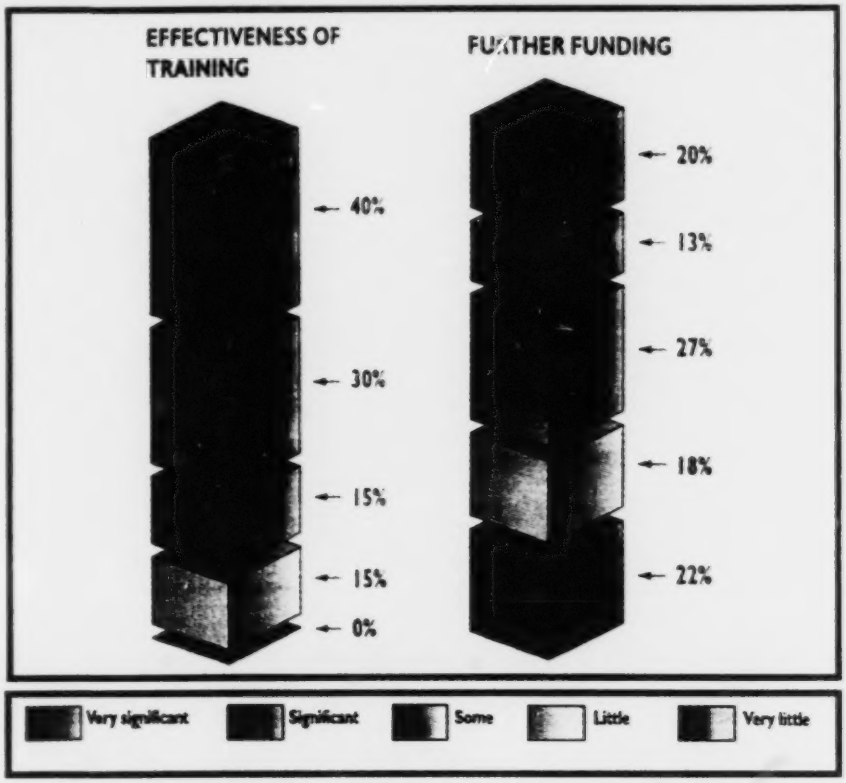
priority. They do not question the effectiveness of the training — 70% of projects reported significant (30%) or very significant (40%) effect.

They concluded that "basic skills training was particularly effective when it formed part of a company strategy model rather than being a response to a crisis or focused on the individual employee." They found that integrating it is better than taking it on as a separate activity, that most employees need up-skilling rather than remediation, but that most employers need some specialist advice on how to meet the need.

In actual outcomes, while none of the participating projects reported 0% effect, 22% of them could not find further funding. According to the agency, "there is no guarantee that the delivery of effective training will lead to further funding for this area of work."

Workbase Training, a national, not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to the training and development of non-managerial employees. In 1995, they commissioned a report to review their experiences from 1992-95 and to consider future trends. Interviewing over 2000 non-managerial employees in 31 organizations, they found that many are concerned about a need to improve their skills in the new economy. However, most felt that they had received limited training, often left to more experienced colleagues and not always structured or evaluated.

Workbase uses the analysis of the changing workplace to argue that a shift will have to take place among employers for them to see that investing in non-managerial staff is to their benefit. The practice at the moment is still short of the goals.



Basic Skills at Work, A Strategy to Help Improve the Competence of the Workforce in England and Wales, p. 12, 13.

Criteria for evaluating Basic Skills at Work projects

- Training and Enterprise Council involvement. Was the TEC a major player in the project?
- TEC policy to basic skill. What kind of profile did the TEC give to basic skill at work?
- Continuation of the work. Did the work continue?
- Further funding for the work. Was the work continued with new and additional money being made available?
- Dissemination. What was the level and effetciveness of dissemination
- Effectiveness of training. How effective was the training provided?
- Impact of Basic Skills at Work provider. What kind of profile did Basic Skills at Work have in providing organisations?
- Level of involvement of employers. What was the involvement of management and supervisory staff in the project?

Basic Skills at Work, A Strategy to Help Improve the Competence of the Workforce in England and Wales, p. 11.

Recommended reading

Basic Skills at Work, A Strategy to Help Improve the Competence of the Workforce in England and Wales, March 1996, 28 pp. (ISBN 1 85990 048 8). The report can be ordered from The Basic Skills Agency, Commonwealth Houhse, 1-19 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1NU.

Nickie Fonda, *The evolving role of the non-managerial workforce*, Workbase Training, December 1995, 18 pp. The report can be ordered from Workbase Training, 67a High Road, Wood Green, London N22 6BH.

"Adcult" and visual literacy: Students as beachcombers[1]

by R. Scott Lamascus

Advertising belongs in the writing classroom because it links language and image in new and complex ways. Ads are an important accessible resource for the classroom in an environment which, as Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen have argued, requires new models of understanding and practicing literacy (*see* Reviews, 11].

James B. Twitchell in *Adcult USA. The Triumph of Advertising in American Culture* (Columbia University Press, 1996) demonstrates the linking of language and image in a fascinating look at advertising culture in an increasingly global economy. Because no single message can be constructed to appeal to a global audience, Twitchell argues, the largest advertisers depend on corporate logos and the sophisticated visual literacies of consumers.

When our eyes respond to these visual and language elements of advertising, we are recognizing familiar themes and variations which operate much like a jazz riff, according to Twitchell. He calls this verbal/visual combination "Adcult."

Adcult is bound together by time-honoured strategies and responses More important than this apparent seamlessness, however, may be those instances in which Adcult experiences discontinuity, gaps, or fissures.

The use of "partial messages" is apparent in this trade ad which ran in in the *Illustrated American Advertiser*, 1856.

Sometimes an ad floats away from its ideological moorings and is marooned. This dislocation does not invalidate Adcult, but makes it all the more valuable, revealing, and interesting for writers in my classrooms. Let me provide an example.

Discontinuity & warrants for argument

A few years ago, my penchant for advertising led me to thumb through some 1940s magazines from my grandmother's attic. Many used familiar strategies—the endorsement of the brand identity ad. Two relatively plain ads caught my eye, however, and it took several days for my mind to unravel what my eyes were seeing, as Twitchell would put it.

I had found discontinuity in Adcult. The first instance advertised house paint in a 1940 issue of The American Home magazine. Below a photograph of a miner in hard-hat and lantern, the text reads: "If you're up on PAINT you know a good reason I'm mining lead."

Sometimes my younger students have no historical perspective on the dangers discovered in lead-based housepaint, so an older student in the room will have to fill in the class knowledge.

In contrast, little explanation is usually needed to explain my other favorite example of debris from Adcult. In this 1940 ad for Weisway bathroom fixtures, a cartoon image of a woman's head is depicted in a spray of water; in a caption above her head she joyfully asks, "Who said showers are only for men?"*

After my students peal with laughter and disbelief, we discuss their questions: "What does she mean, showers are only for men?' Often they are equally mystified by the ad's discussion of the "health and beauty value" of showers.

Visual images from old ads are uniquely revealing because the tides of change and time have eroded the pillars of social and ideological support for the assumptions on which the ads were built.

This erosion of warrants has left vulnerable, visual images teetering where stable ones had been.

I use this debris from Adcult as a means of illustrating the intuitive visual literacy which my students bring into the classroom. They know how to read these image-and-language texts so well as to be unaware of their abilities. They also know when something is missing or has changed. They sense that they have stumbled onto cultural debris.

These examples also illustrate how the warrants which undergird persuasion are constantly shifting. I make an advertising-based writing assignment an important bridge between their powerful visual literacies and their persuasive writing. Frequently this assignment focuses on the use of examples in students' texts.

As preparation for writing assignments, I sometimes send my students out as beachcombers to find ads which seem to have been marooned. I also suggest they consider looking for:

- partial messages or broken hierarchies;
- serial images—on the same theme, for the same products';
- unanticipated or unintended "borrowed interest" as a product gathers unexpected associations through a sponsor or spokesperson (Twitchell 43);
- juxtaposed images where themes bump together in surprising ways (sometimes between the visual text and the world); and
- interchangeable images or messages as ads attempt to add "value to interchangeable objects" (30).

The results of their searches are always interesting and sometimes remarkable. For example, one writer considered serial images and lined up credit card ads aimed at her peers in the university market. Another student chose to compare appeals in condom ads. Still another looked at cosmetics advertising aimed at African-American women. Another collected ads which used the Statue of Liberty for everything from cigarettes to fishing tackle.

As these writers work toward creating their own texts based on these ads, I try to use the ads they have brought in to model logic concepts, demonstrate strategies for using examples in an argument, or to model other critical thinking tasks.[2]

I try to help them become beachcombers because the debris of Adcult is especially useful in helping them articulate and practice visual literacies at work.

Suggested reading: For additional uses of advertisement in the writing classroom, see Stuart Hirschberg's Strategies of Argument. (2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1996). I use advertisements to introduce logic-mapping, using John D. Ramage and John C. Bean's Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings, (3rd ed. New York: Allyn & Bacon, 1994)..

[1]This discussion is based on material developed at the University of Oklahoma and presented at the 1996 Conference on College Composition andCommunication in Milwaukee, WI. [2] I have discussed logic-map using ads in Oklahoma English Journal 7.1. (1992): 52-5.

* Permission to reproduce the original ads was refused.[Ed]

R. Scott LaMascus is Assistant Professor of English at Georgia Southwestern College, a Senior Unit of the University System of Georgia in Americus, GA.

Adcult

An intriguing and informative place to begin with advertising is James B. Twitchell's *Adcult USA: The Triumph of Advertising in American Culture* (Columbia University Press, 1996). Twitchell's lively and sometimes acerbic history demonstrates the linking of language and image in a fascinating look at advertising culture in an increasingly global economy.

In an era of internationalization, Twitchell argues, a single message cannot be constructed to appeal to a global audience. No single spokesperson, set of values, or assumed desires can bridge such broad audiences. So the largest advertisers depend on corporate logos and the sophisticated visual literacies of consumers.

Twitchell writes: "The eye decodes what stymies the mind, hence the golden arches, the Pillsbury Doughboy,...the red of Coca-Cola..." (22)

When our eyes respond to these visual and language elements of advertising, we are recognizing familiar themes and variations which operate much like a jazz riff, according to Twitchell. He calls this verbal/visual combination "Adcult." "We play with the language of Adcult because we know that the tune is already familiar"(45).

This analysis is spellbinding to enthusiasts who collect ads or the quirky, opinionated histories of the industry such Twitchell's or E.S. Turner's *The Shocking History of Advertising* (Ballantine 1953).

Twitchell looks at specific ads and strategies such as the repeated use of "high" art, the elaboration of a slogan, or the theme of "magic" in ads from the 1920s to the dawn of the 21st century. He finds a syncretic tradition in advertising.[RSL]

Creating texts for literacy teaching

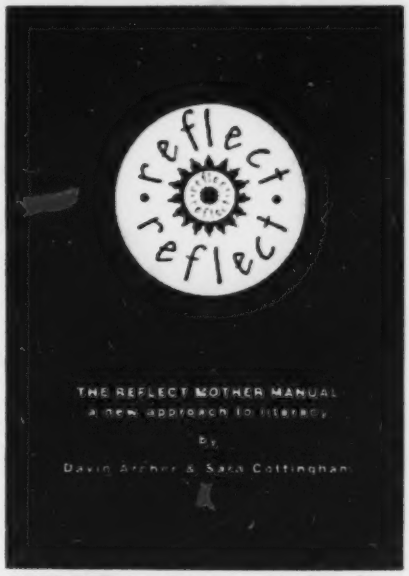
review of ***REFLECT Mother Manual, a new approach to literacy***
by David Archer and Sara Cottingham,
ACTIONAID: London, 1996, 278 pp.

REFLECT is called a new approach to adult literacy which fuses the theory of Paulo Freire and the practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal. Although used until now only in the developing world, (see p. 3), as conceived and pilot-tested by ACTION-AID, a UK-based international development agency, it is built on analysis of literacy practice that should have wider currency.

Because there is no textbook - no literacy "primer" - in a REFLECT program, the only printed matter is this Mother Manual, a guide for facilitators in helping community literacy circles develop their own learning materials by constructing "graphics — "maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams that represent local reality, systematize the existing knowledge of participants and promote detailed analysis of local issues."

According to the writers, by the end of the REFLECT process, each circle should have produced between 20 and 30 maps, matrices, calendars or diagrams representing a detailed analysis of their comunity. This permanent record can be used for planning their own local initiatives. Meanwhile, the sponsoring organization, by asking facilitators to copy each graphic, can end up with a detailed survey of the conditions, needs and attitudes of people in every community which might take years to produce using other methods.

The Manual starts with an introduction to the theory and philosophy of

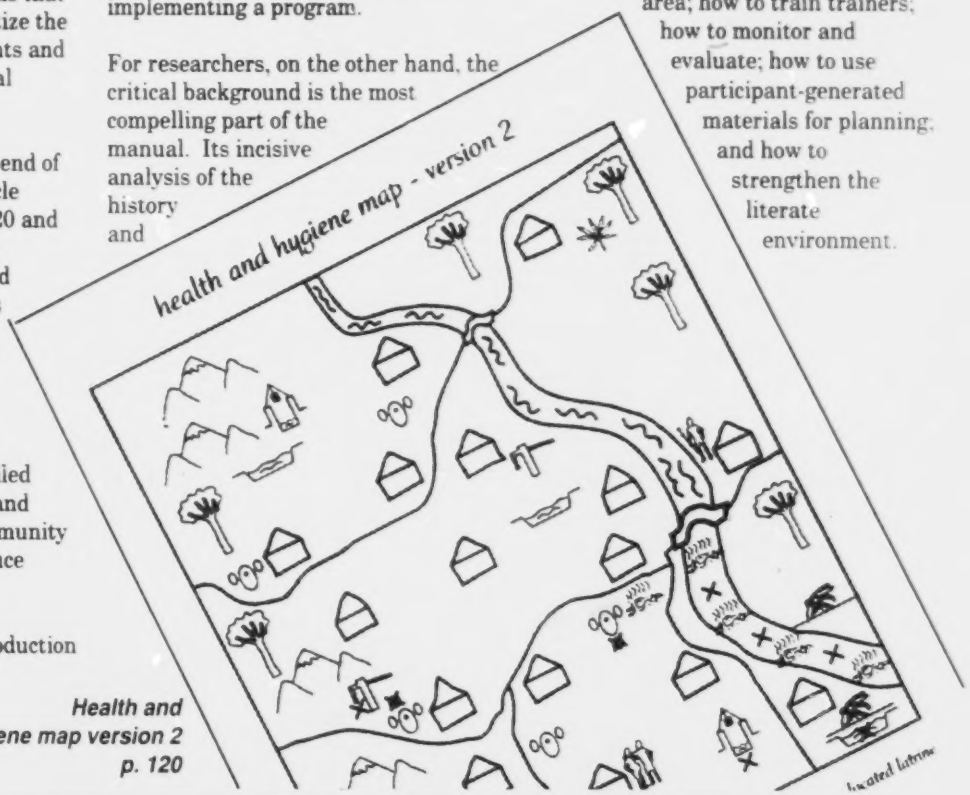


REFLECT, involving a critical reading of the gap between Freire's intentions and the uses to which his philosophy has been put. The writers tell facilitators that this is a difficult part and that it is not necessary to read it all or to understand it before implementing a program.

For researchers, on the other hand, the critical background is the most compelling part of the manual. Its incisive analysis of the history and failures of past literacy programs and of Freirian practice is outstanding, and its background on visual literacy (see p. 3.) illustrates how an applied understanding of this concept can underpin innovative and responsive practices.

Section 3 provides a detailed introduction to the REFLECT method, stage by stage It includes constructing a graphic on the ground; copying the graphic to paper using visual cards; using the graphic to introduce reading and writing; developing numeracy work arising from the graphic; and explaining how discussion and local action emerge from the process.

Section 4 explains how to implement the approach. It includes basic steps (such as developing a local strategy, budgeting etc) and answers to some basic questions; how to do local research on socio-economic conditions, language, literacy use and numeracy in order to adapt the approach to the local area; how to train trainers; how to monitor and evaluate; how to use participant-generated materials for planning; and how to strengthen the literate environment.



Health and hygiene map version 2 p. 120

Uses of REFLECT manuals

The strategies outlined in this REFLECT Mother Manual represent the accumulated learning from REFLECT field programmes to date. However, REFLECT is not a pre-packaged approach, it is not something that you can simply pick up off the shelf and adopt. Rather you need to invest some time in adapting the approach to your own environment and needs. Although there are certain core principles in the REFLECT approach there is always the opportunity for creative input and innovation which will strengthen the methodology and inform future editions of this (and other) manuals.

To date, for example, REFLECT has been applied mostly in rural areas. As urban programmes are started up they will advance the REFLECT methodology and bring in new ideas. In the three pilot programmes, the facilitators' manuals were each prepared in rural areas on a portable computer by a small core group (of between 4 and 8 people) working over three to four weeks. Most had not been seriously involved in literacy work before.

The product in each case was very different. The facilitators' manual for Usulutan in El Salvador for example, included land tenancy maps, displacement maps and matrices on human rights; in Uganda the manual included gender workload calendars, crop matrices and resource maps; and in contrast in Bangladesh the manual had a focus on numeracy, with income and expenditure calendars, projections of loan use and household decision making matrices. (8)

Section 5 offers sample units, giving practical examples of how to use the REFLECT approach. This starts with a sample set of ten basic units to give a sense of how to sequence a manual. Other sample units are organized by theme — economic issues, health, socio-political issues. The authors emphasize: **None of the Units outlined here are intended to be directly reproduced. Rather, you will need to adapt them to your own needs.**

Finally, Section 6 gives ideas for adapting the REFLECT approach to different communities, e.g. urban areas, fishing communities, et al. This section also outlines how the approach can be adapted to work with children. It ends by showing how a range of other participatory approaches can be interwoven with the participatory structure of REFLECT, including the use of role play, drama, songs, dance, story-telling, visualisation, radio, "real materials", games or proverbs.

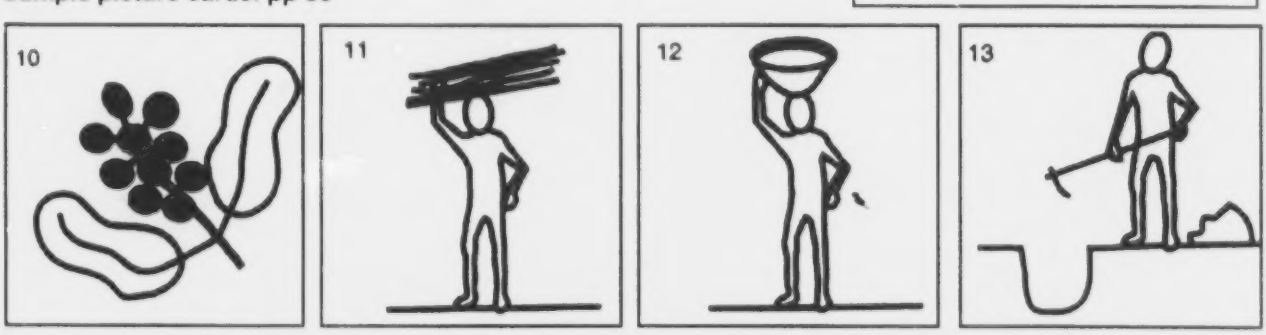
An appendix gives details of training courses and publications on "Participatory Rural Appraisal.

Also recommended: David Archer and Sara Cottingham. *Action Research Report on REFLECT, Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques*. London, UK: Oversaes Development Administration, Serial No 17, March 1996.

Starting with learners

However, whilst REFLECT should be flexibly interpreted it can also be distorted. Taking on REFLECT needs commitment to handing over the control development to local people themselves. The starting point needs to be respect for the existing knowledge and skills of adults. The REFLECT process focuses on promoting the exchange of experience and the collective construction of new knowledge. Traditional "primers" are rejected because they prevent this process, providing learners with pre-packaged product. The facilitators' manual, whilst being highly structured, aims to promote a participatory process through whci people can develop their own learning materials. Reading, writing and numeracy work flow from these materials, rather than being regarded as something separate. Integration is the essence of the approach.(8)

Sample picture cards. pp 56



Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Communication,

by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. Routledge: London, 1996. 288 pp. ISBN 0-415-10599-4, 0-415-10600-1(pbk).

In terms of the new visual literacy, schools are producing illiterates, argue the authors of this book. Teacher training programs do no better. True to its title, this book attempts to lay the theoretical ground for a grammar of the visual which they claim has evolved over the past five centuries in Western communication, until it now challenges the once-sacred dominance of language.

Semiotics is the study of signs as they are used to create meaning. While early theorists concentrated on the potential of creating meaning by abstractly matching a system of available meanings with available forms, Michael Halliday added the concept of social context. Social semioticians now focus on the resources for making meaning available to real people in real social contexts. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that these resources are becoming more visual and less verbal, and that we need a formal way of describing and talking about the the organizing principles behind visual communication.

They also claim practical as well as theoretical applications for this work. Educators should be interested in understanding what kinds of charts, maps, diagrams and layout are most effective for learning. The authors also hope to broaden the objects of critical discourse analysis to include the media of entertainment.

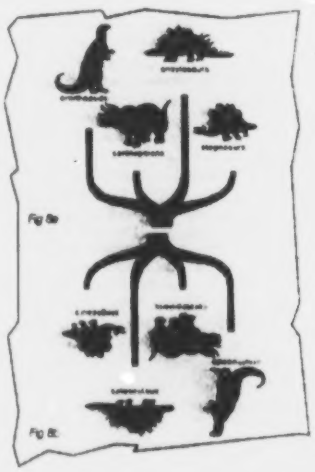
If, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, a linguistic grammar is an "inventory of elements and rules underying culture-specific verbal communication," then a grammar of visual design is an "inventory of elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication." They emphasize that it is not "universal" but culturally specific.
The book examines how images communicate meaning through the formal elements and structure of design — colour, perspective, framing and composition. They focus on the order, the organization of the visual on a surface, rather than the iconography which is the more usual focus in such discussion. Their examples are both ordinary and sophisticated — illuminated manuscripts, paintings, sculpture, children's books and toys, science textbooks, newspaper, advertisements—touching every aspect of our conscious lives.

While some of the theory is too complex for the general reader, there are sections of this book that should be mandatory for anyone who works in literacy today and wants to understand what the literacy of the future might look like. One chapter offers a brief "unconventional history of writing" which outlines in three pages the progressive subordination of the visual in Western culture. It points out how we have characterized cultures which still use both media of representation as "illiterate, impoverished, underdeveloped, when in fact they have a richer array of means of representation than that overtly and consciously available to literate cultures." I thought of this when reading the REFLECT manual.

This book in its entirety should be on the required reading list of teachers in training for language, science, media studies, graphic design and fine arts. It offers new ways of seeing and thinking about literacy. [LS]

Reading visuals — examples for teachers

One implication of my argument here, that the visual is a central medium of communication and information, is that children are expected to be competent in taking meaning ("reading") from two quite distinct media: from written language and from visual images. This implies.... that the system of visual images, like the system of language, has a set of regularities, a grammar, which is utilized in communication, and which permits the quite deliberate construction of precise meanings... [M]uch of my research over the last 10 years or so has been focused on establishing the regularities of that grammar. Let me give you the briefest illustration. Below is an evolutionary tree, common since the ascendancy of Darwinian accounts of natural history (Fig. 8a).Underneath is the same diagram, turned on its head. Perhaps you will agree with me that the diagram (Fig. 8b) now suggests a different version of natural history: one is the gradual evolution from primeval ooze towards humankind; the other is that of an implied divine descent, a creationist account perhaps. 'Up' and 'down' in visual space and direc-tionality have, it seems, quite precise meanings.



Gunther Kress, "Literacy or literacies: thoughts for an agenda for the day after tomorrow," *Basic Skills*, Spring 1996, p.17. Reprinted with permission.

Resources are catalogued and may be borrowed in person or by mail (postage covered by the borrower). Documents should be requested by number. Documents can be consulted in The Centre from Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

In addition to the materials listed in the catalogue, we have directories of program and services, bibliographies on many subjects, international periodicals and newsletters, catalogues of learning materials, tapes/videos, and hanging files. We are connected to the National Adult Literacy Database and Internet. Printouts on specific subject headings can be requested at cost.

Information: Peggy Killeen (514) 931-8731, local 1415; literacycentr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca.

Participatory research and practice

•Archer, David , and Sara Cottingham. *Action Research Report on REFLECT, Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques*. London, UK: Overseas Development Administration, Serial No 17, 1996. *Report*

•Archer, David , and Sara Cottingham. *REFLECT Mother Manual, Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques*. London, UK:ACTIONAID, 1996. *Guide*

450.013 *Curriculum Guide*
•Auerbach, Elsa Roberts. *Making Meaning Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1992.

450.034 *Guide*
•Auerbach, Elsa, et al. *Adult ESL/Literacy from the Community to the Community: A Guidebook for Participatory Literacy Training*. Mahwah, NJ: 1996.

1151.007 *Book*
•Atkinson, Tannis, Frances Ennis, and Betty-Ann Lloyd. *Listen to Women in Literacy: The Power of Women-Positive Literacy Work*. Toronto, ON: The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1994.

280.007 *Book*
•Barndt, Deborah. *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action*. Toronto, ON: Jesuit Center for Social Faith and Justice, 1989.

550.037*Book*
•Crone, Catherine D., and Carman St. John Hunter, comp. *From the Field: Tested Participatory Activities for Trainers*. New York, NY: World Education, 1980.

740.005 *Report*
•Hamilton, Mary, Roz Ivanic, and David Barton. *Knowing Where We Are: Participatory Research and Adult Literacy*. Working Paper Series 29. Lancaster, England: Centre for Language in Social Life, 1991.

1150.074 *Kit*
•ICAE Women's Program. *The Women's Kit*. Toronto, ON: The Participatory Research Group, 1987.

1151.010 *Document*
•Lloyd, Betty-Ann. *Discovering the Strength of Our Voices: Women and Literacy Programs*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1991.

1151.006 *Book*
•Lloyd, Betty-Ann, Frances Ennis, and Tannis Atkinson. *The Power of Woman-Positive Literacy Work: Program-Based Action Research*. Toronto; ON: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1994.

1151.008 *Book*
•Lloyd, Betty-Ann, Frances Ennis, and Tannis Atkinson, eds. *Women in Literacy Speak: The Power of Women-Positive Literacy Work*. Toronto; ON: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1994.

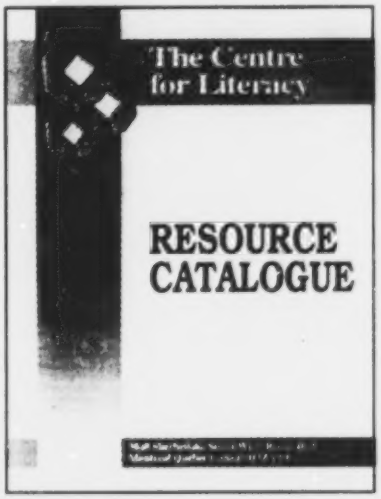
•McCoy, Martha, Phyllis Emigh, Matt Leighninger, and Molly Barrett. *Planning Community-Wide Study Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide*.Topsfield Foundation, 1996. *Guide*

450.014 *Handbook*
•Nash, Andrea , et al. *Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1992. *Handbook*

490.001 *Book*
•The Samaritan House PAR Group. *Where There is Life, There is Hope: Women Literacy Students and Discrimination*. Brandon, MB: Literacy and Continuing Education Branch. Department of Education and Training, 1995.

510.020 Guide
•The Well Power Group. *Can we Talk?: Creating a Participatory Health Project*. Haverhill, MA: Community Action Inc., 1995.

The Centre for Literacy announces publication of its Resource Catalogue



This catalogue offers a partial listing of almost 3000 of the items available at The Centre for borrowing or consulting. The subject headings have been assigned over the past two years using the Canadian Literacy Thesaurus with a small number of additional subject categories to reflect the broad nature of our collection which extends beyond adult literacy.

PRICES

In Canada	$25.00 CAN, includes p & h
In the US	$25.00 US, includes p & h
Overseas	$25.00 US (surface mail).

Please inquire for airmail rates

To order: Send request with cheque or money order payable to The Centre for Literacy to
The Centre for Literacy,
3040 Sherbrooke Street West,
Montreal, QC, Canada, H3Z 1A4.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

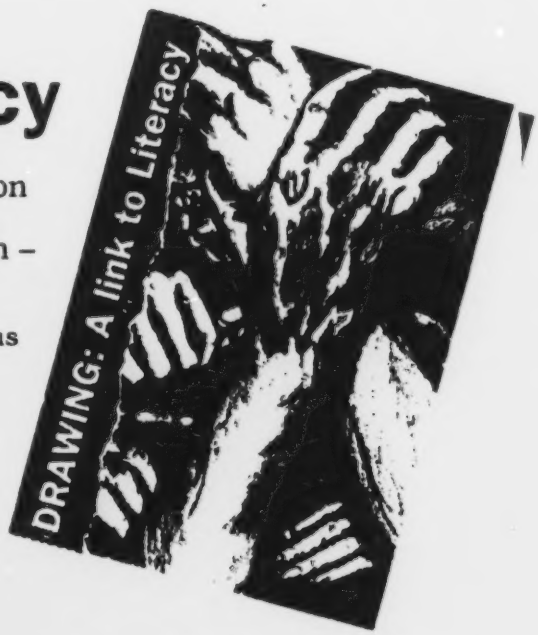
DRAWING: A link to Literacy

Stunning drawings and moving texts on social and personal issues that touch us all – war, race, love, AIDS, pollution – produced by college students.

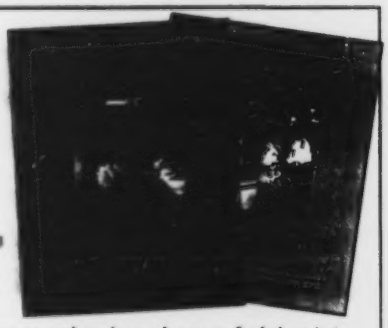
To order a copy send a cheque for $10.00 plus $3.00 shipping & handling.

Cheque is payable to
The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4.

Information on special price for multiple copies:
(514) 931-8731, local 1415.



COME TO THE LIBRARY SERIES



The British Columbia Library Association has published this graphic user-friendly series for adult literacy learners that demystifies the library and makes a learner feel that it is never too late to start. The four books include:

Book One:
Welcome to the Library
Part 1-An Adult Learner's Guide; Part 2— Going to the Library as an Adult

Book Two
May I Help You?
Part 1- Who Goes to the Library & Who Works There?
Part 2 - Taking out Books

Book Three
Getting a Feeling for Public Libraries and Books
Part 1 - Browsing at your Library; Part 2 - Talking about What You Read

Book Four
Trying out Your Library's Computer, Microfiche or Card Catalogue
Part 1 - Your Library's Catalogue; Part 2 - More about Library Catalogues

Information and orders: British Columbia Library Association, 110 - 6545 Bonsor Avenue, Burnaby, BC, Canada, V5H 1H3, Tel: (604) 430-9633; Fax: (604) 430-8595.

sharing What Works

An Adult ESL Literacy Video Series for Teachers

This staff development series produced by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) offers 4 tapes of effective ESL and adult literacy programs (an introductory tape is also available.). The programs highlighted are

Tape 1 - The writing program at Invergarry Learning Centre in Surrey, B.C.

Tape 2 - Union-sponsored worker ESL education at the International Garment **Workers Union (NYC)**

Tape 3 - Hotel workplace ESL classes at the Arlington (VA) Education and Employment Program

Tape 4 - Native language litercay and ESL at the Haitian Multi-Service Center (Boston)

Information and orders: Fran Keenan, National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE), Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, Tel: (202) 429-9292, ext 200.

Travelling Teacher Resource Trunk on Learning Difference and Disabilities – *Hands Across the Border*

The Centre for Literacy, in partnership with the Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG), has developed a travelling resource trunk of materials on learning disabilities for teachers and tutors who do not have easy access to resource centres because of constraints of time or distance.

This kit is based on a similar one developed by the LD Work Group of the New England Literacy Resource Center (NLERC) which has been circulating in Vermont; it came to our attention at the IRA Adolescent and Adult Literacy Conference in February. Ann Crocker, a Vermont member of the LD Work Group, and Silja Kallenbach, Director of NLERC, gave us permission to copy several binders of teacher materials in the kit. We have added a number of Canadian and British resources, and are sharing our version with NLERC.

The kit contains books, articles, worksheets, evaluation instuments and a video on many aspects of LD. They touch on literacy, numeracy and technology. A second kit on new materials in literacy is being developed for QLWG in the fall of 1996.

Beginning in September, two LD kits will be in circulation in Quebec — one reserved for QLWG members and one available to any organization which requests it. They may be kept for three weeks. Transportation will be the responsibility of the borrower.

Information: Call Peggy Killeen, after August 15, at (514) 931-8731, local 1415; Fax (514) 931-5181; e-mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

STAPLE

(Supplemental Training for Alberta Practitioners in Literacy Education)

Billed as Canada's first multimedia training program for adult literacy teachers, STAPLE '96 consists of a CD-ROM (for Mackintosh and IBM) and a handbook, divided into five modules: Introduction to Assessment; Reading Assessment; Teaching Reading; Writing Assessment; and Teaching Writing.

Developed by teacher-researchers Pat Campbell and Flo Brokop in Edmonton for the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, STAPLE is appropriate for literacy practitioners anywhere. It is a user-friendly, interactive software that presents a balanced theoretical base for teaching reading and writing. Integrating language experience with phonics-where-needed, the disc makes assessment inseparable from instruction. Teacher/tutors can choose to enter at any of the five modules and then concentrate on specific aspects of the reading or writing process according to personal interest or level of prior knowledge. For those

who want a more systematic approach, a certification for each module has been developed.

In a recent Montreal workshop, Pat and Flo kept stressing the "supplemental" intention. STAPLE, they claimed, was not meant to replace basic teacher or tutor training. It was intended to refresh, reinforce or extend previous training. However, workshop participants, especially those who came from remote areas where training is difficult to access, felt that STAPLE could be offered to tutors who might not easily get other training.

The possible uses are obviously wider than those imagined by the developers. Watching the easy-to-follow explanations of the reading and writing process, I could see this disc being helpful to many community college English teachers.

The acronym and the title of this product are contradictory. While the title might imply that it is only for Alberta literacy practitioners, that interpretation would be a shame. The acronym comes much closer to describing the potential— it should be a STAPLE among the resources of both tutors and teachers.[LS]

To order: In Canada, STAPLE is $110.21 (includes shipping, handling and GST). Outside Canada, the price is CAN $250. Volume discounts are available. Send prepaid orders to Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, Room 211 RMP, Alberta Vocational College, 332 - 6th Avenue SE, Calgary, AB T2G 4S6, Canada. Inquiries: Tel: (403) 297-4995; Fax: (403) 297-4849.

In Quebec, STAPLE can be previewed at The Centre for Literacy.

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WEB SITES TO NOTE:

- **The Centre for Literacy: http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm**
- National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) has announced a new site: **http://www.cal.org/CAL/HTML/ncle.htm**

Office of Learning Technologies (OLT)

Vision of the OLT

Contributing to the development of a lifelong learning culture in Canada

The Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) has been established within Human Resources Development Canada with the mission of working with partners to expand innovative learning opportunities through technologies. They envisage their main clients as groups of adult Canadians, particularly HRD clients, interested in new opportunities to upgrade their skills in an environment where traditional concepts of work and learning are being challenged. The focus is on expanding access. The OLT is currently working to develop partnerships, projects, a database and web site and innovative learning sites to implement their vision

Information: Office of Learning Technologies (OLT), 15 Eddy Street, Ground Floor, Hull, QC, K1A 0J9. Faxback service: 1-800-724-7344; Fax: (819) 997-6777; Internet: olthrdc@ibm.net

Available Learning Technologies

- Print (non-interactive)
- Radio and audio cassette
- Television and videocassette
- Conferencing (Audio,video, computer-one-way and two-way)
- Computer-assisted instruction
- Multimedia (interactive, videodisc, CD-ROM)
- Hypermedia
- Networking, e.g. Internet
- Expert systems and artificial intelligence
- Virtual reality and simulation

Software Evaluation Service

The Centre for Literacy offers an open invitation for teachers and tutors to book appointments to preview a selection of 55 software products in adult literacy and basic skills. from producers in Canada, the US and the UK. Resources include software from Autoskill International, CTAD, Curriculum Associates, Interactive Knowledge, Tom Snyder Productions, TRO Learning and many more. STAPLE, The New Reading Disc, A Day in the Life, Oregon Trail II are among the recent favourites.

Call Peggy Killeen at 931-8731, local 1415, or fax 931-5181 to make an appointment or to request a list of software.

NEW CD-ROM

Assessing Learning Difficulties in the Workplace

This product for Windows and Macintosh was developed by The University of Calgary, Alberta Vocational College and The Learning Centre in Calgary to offer supervisors, foremen, workplace trainers, human resource workers and occupational and health and safety teams some skills in identifying and assisting employees who may have literacy or learning difficulties. It is supplemented by manuals, videos and workshops.

Information: Film Library, Department of Communications Media, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary AB, Canada T2N 1N4, Tel: (403) 220-3709; Fax: (403) 282-4497.

Look for a review of this software in an upcoming issue.

Chronological Conference Listing

Local

PAPT-PACT Convention
November 14 -15, 1996
Palais de Congres, Montreal
Information: Rod Elkin, 694-9777 or outside Montreal 1-800-361-9870

National/International

16th International Conference on Critical Thinking and Educational Reform
July 28 - 31, 1996
Sonoma State University
Rohnert Park, CA
Information: The Center for Critical Thinking, Sonoma State University, 1801 E. Cotati Ave.,Rohnert Park, CA, USA 94928-3609, Tel: 707) 664-2940; Fax: (707) 664-4101

International Whole Language Umbrella Conference
"Celebrating Literacy"
August 1 - 4, 1996
St. Paul, MN
Information: Tel: (612) 255-4887; e-mail: umbrella96@tigger.stcloud.msus.edu

Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) Annual Summer Conference
August 1 - 4, 1996
Oxford, OH
Information: Charles Shuster, Department of English, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI 53201, USA.

Adult Literacy and Technology Ninth Annual Conference (ALT)
August 2 - 3, 1996,
Chicago, IL
Information: Illinois Secretary of State Literacy Office, 431 S. Fourth Street, Springfield, IL 62701, Tel: (217) 785-6927; Fax: (217) 524-3529; e-mail: jgordon@library.sos.state.il.us

Northeast Whole Language Conference
August 11 - 14, 1996
Johnson State College
Johnson, VT
Information: John Thomas Poeton, 32 Plateau Drive, Barre, VT 05641, Fax: (802) 479-3235; e-mail: JPOETON@aol.com

2nd International Conference NCTE (US), US Department of Defense Dependents Education, The National Writing Project, NATE (UK)
"Global Conversations on Language and Literacy"
August 12 - 14, 1996
Heidelberg, Germany
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096

Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada
11th Biennial Conference
July 31 - August 4, 1996
Information: Capital Region Centre for the Hearing Impaired, Tel: (613) 729-1467; TTY: (613) 729-6189; Fax: (613) 729-5167

Frontier College National Conference
September 25 - 29, 1996
Toronto, ON
Information: Frontier College, 35 Jackes Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4T 1E2, Tel: (416) 923-3591; fax: (416) 323-3522; e-mail: Frontier_College@edu.yorku.ca

Society for Literature & Science 1996 Annual Meeting
October 10 - 13, 1996
Atlanta, GA
Information: Anne Balsamo, School of Literature, Communication & Culture, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA 30332-0165

Learning for the Future Employment and self-dependence in an enterprise society
A symposium on partnership between education and business
October 23 - 25, 1996
Elsinore, Denmark
Information: Finn Lindhard, Frederiksborg Amt, Education & Industry & Culture, Amtsgaarden, Kongens Vaenge 2, 3400 Hillerød, Denmark, Fax: +45 48 24 29 14; e-mail: f-lindh@inet.uni-c.dk

1996 European Writing Conferences
of EARLI Special Interest Group Writing and Computers Association
October 23 - 25, 1996
Barcelona, Spain
Information: 1996 European Writing Conferences, Institute of Educational Sciences, University of Barcelona, Edifici de Migdia, Pasco Vall d'Hebron 171. 08035 Barcelona, Spain, or EARLI SIG WRITING, Liliana Tolchinsky, Tel: 34(3) 428 2142 ext 3384; Fax: 34(3) 402 1016; E-mail: SIGWRITI@TRIVIUM.GH.UB.ES

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
1996 Adult Education Conference
October 30 - November 2, 1996
Charlotte, NC
Information; AAACE, 1200 19th Street, NW, Ste. 300, Washington, D.C. 20036, Tel: (202) 429-5131; Fax: (202) 223-4579

College Reading & Learning Association
October 30 - November 3, 1996
Albuquerque, NM
Information: Tel: (303) 556-3057; Fax: (303) 556-2159; e-mail: ORLANDOV@MSCD.EDU

1996 Ontario Council of Teachers of English, Communications and Language Arts (OCTECLA)
"English and Change: Bridging the Gaps"
October 31 - November 1, 1996
Toronto, ON
Information: Alex Bostock, Notre Dame Catholic High School, 12 Malvern Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4E 3E1, Tel: (416)393-5501; Fax: (416) 393-5631

Second International Conference on Women and Literacy
November 1 - 3, 1996
Atlanta, GA
Information: Joanne Nurss/Sheryl Gowen, The Center for the Study of Adult Literacy, Georgia State University, Tel: (404) 651-2405; Fax: (404) 651-1415

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
86th Annual Convention
November 21 - 24, 1996
Chicago, IL
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096

Association for Community Based Education (ACBE)
21st Annual Conference
November 22 - 24, 1996

Monterey, CA
Information: ACBE, 1805 Florida Avenie, NW, Washington, D.C.20009, Tel: (202) 462-6333

Modern Language Association (MLA)
December 27 - 30, 1996
Washington, D.C.
Information: Convention office, MLA, 10 Astor, Place, New York,NY 1003-6981; e-mail: convention@mla.org

College Composition and Communication
March 12 - 15, 1997
Phoenix, AZ
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096

The Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning
March 24 -26, 1997
Ottawa, ON
Information: Canadian Alliance for Lifelong Learning, Tel: (613) 993-2810; Fax: (613) 941-1164; e-mail: call@gsro.carleton.ca
Web Site: http://gcll.carleton.ca

British Dyslexia Society
Fourth International Conference
"Dyslexia: Biological Bases, Identification and Intervention"
April 1 - 4, 1997
University of York
Information: BDA Conference Office, Department of Psychology, University of York, YO1 5DD, UK

International Reading Association
42nd Annual Convention
May 4 - 7, 1997
Atlanta, GA
Information: IRA, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE, USA 19714-8139, Tel: (302) 731-1600, ext 226; Fax: (302) 731-1057.

The 13th Computers and Writing Conference
Kapi'olani Community College, University of Hawaii
June 5 - 9, 1997
Honolulu, Hawaii
Information: Computers and Writing Conference\1997, Arts and Science Department, Kapi'olani Community College, 4303 Diamond Head Road, Honolulu, HI 96816, e-mail: cw97@lahi.kcc.hawaii.edu

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
Writing Across Languages, About the Power of Writing in Foreign Language Learning

edited by Gerd Bräuer.
A call for submissions from language teachers at all levels to share theoretical or practical approaches to using writing as a mode of learning in foreign language classrooms. The premise of this collection is that writing can serve as a bridge in second language acquisition creating connections among speaking, listening and reading, between one's native and the target language, and between the experienced culture and the one to be discovered; it can also bridge different ways of learning.
Information: Gerd Bräuer, Department of German Studies, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322, USA.
Deadline: January 1, 1997

Georgia State University

Bibliography on Women and Literacy

This 19-page annotated bibliography is an outcome of the First International Conference on Women and Literacy that was held in Atlanta in February 1995. Prepared by Lisa Belcher and Jenny Hopkins for the Center for the Study of Adult Literacy at Georgia State University, it offers an extensive listing of books and articles on the subject published from the early 1980's to the present.
To order: The Center for the Study of Adult Literacy, Georgia State University, Tel: (404) 651-2405; Fax: (404) 651-1415

IALS [International Adult Literacy Survey] newsletter

The National Literacy Secretariat is producing an information series at irregular intervals on IALS entitled "Canada Report on Adult Literacy." The June issue (Vol.2) has press clippings from Canadian newspapers and a reference to the June 5 issue of the Statistics Canada magazine *Perspectives on Labour and Income* which includes two articles on IALS.
Information: "Canada Report on Adult Literacy." can be requested from the NLS, Tel: 819) 953-5280; e-mail: <<nls@fox.nstn.ca>> or found at their Internet Web site: <<http://www.nald.ca/nls/nls.htm>>

UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education

"Adult Education: A Key for the Twenty-First Century"
July 14 -18, 1997
Hamburg Germany
This conference will be organized around ten themes: Adult Learning and the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century; Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning; Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education; Promoting the empowerment of women through adult learning; Adult learning and the changing world of work; Adult learning in the context of preventive security: Environment, health and population; Adult learning, media and culture; The economics of adult learning; and Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity.

The conference will UNESCO-led with other co-operating partners to be invited including: ILO, FAO, UNDP, UNFPSA, UNEP, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO, OECD, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, and regional government entities (e.g. the European Commission, the Organization of American States, the Organization of African Unity, etc.)

Preparatory activities will begin in 1996; these include questionnaires, formation of a consultative committee to examine a proposed Declaration on Adult Learning and draft of an Agenda for the Future. Six regional preparatory meetings will take place at the end of 1996 in Africa, in Asia and the Pacific, in Latin America, in the Caribbean, in the Arab States and in Europe. Thematic groups will also be formed.

Information: UNESCO Institute for Education, Feldbrunnenstrasse 58, 20148 Hamburg, Germany, Tel: (+49 40) 44 80 41-0; Fax: (+49 40) 410 77 23; e-mail: uie@unesco.org

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning

March 24 - 26, 1997
Ottawa, ON

Information: Canadian Alliance for Lifelong Learning, Tel: (613) 993-2810; Fax: (613) 941-1164; e-mail: call@gsro.carleton.ca
Web Site: http://gcll.carleton.ca

Fourth Annual Canada Post Flight for Freedom Awards 1996

The Flight for Freedom Awards were established in 1992 by Canada Post to recognize the contributions of companies, literacy organizations, educators and individuals in improving Canadian literacy skills.

Information/forms: Flight for Freedom Awards, Canada Post Corporation, 2701 Riverside Drive, Suite NO610, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0B1.

Deadline: July 19, 1996

Multi-Literacies The shape of the new landscape of communication

Third Domains of Literacy
September 7 - 8, 1996
University of London Institute of Education

The aim of this conference is to debate the agenda for practical and theoretical work in literacy over the coming decades. Among the topics are: the new forms of communication and new forms of texts; the connections of these new forms to the economy and work in the context of global networks of production, culture and finance; and implications for education at all levels in diverse formal and informal settings.

Information: Paula Larkins, Conference Office, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0Al,
Tel: 011-44-171-612-6403

Announcing summer publication

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women CCLOW

Making Connections A manual of literacy materials for women

Quebec launch Sept.1996
Information: CCLOW, 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON, M4E 2V6.
Tel: (4160 688-1909;
Fax: (416) 699-2145

Literacy & health:
an annotated bibliography

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Montreal, Quebec,
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Canada.

Sample bibliography: Health and literacy

Title: **Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine: A Shortened Screening Instrument**

Source: Family Medicine
25(6): 391-5 June 1993

Summary:
Due to increased awareness of the link between literacy and health, tests have been developed to assess the literacy level of patients in order to determine their needs in terms of health care information. An analysis of 'REALM,' a quick, efficient, and easy-to-administer literacy test is provided within this paper. 'REALM' was found to be a valid and reliable instrument with practical value as a rapid estimate of patient literacy and as an additional tool to address the health care needs of low-literacy patients.

Title: **Fotoplatica: An Innovative Teaching Method For Families With Low Literacy and High Stress**

Source: Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing
1993, vol. 10, no.3:
112-4

Summary:
An overview of Fotoplatica which is, in this case, pictorial posters used to explain procedures and pain experienced during cancer treatment. The target group for this experiment was illiterate Latino families whose children have cancer. The method was found to be extremely effective in creating a higher level of understanding and in decreasing anxiety.

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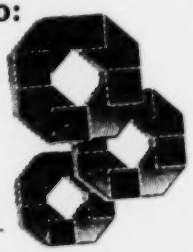

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VOL 6 No. 1 SPRING 1996

Media FOCUS

THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY

Teaching with motion pictures: A series

By David M. Considine
Appalachian State University
Boone, NC

Editor's Note: What follows is an excerpt of a three-part series written by David Considine and being published in Telemedium. The excerpt below is from Part 1: Film and Language Arts which appeared in the Spring 1996 issue, Volume 42, Number 1. Reprinted with permission.

The Language of Film

So long as Hollywood continues to make movies of books like **Cry The Beloved Country, The Scarlet Letter** and **Sense and Sensibility,** English teachers will inevitably use these films to advance the traditional curriculum. While exploring the novel, however, it is also possible to look at the process of storytelling in both print and picture. In **American Cinema**, the outstanding Annenberg video series, one program for example seeks to explore decisions directors make to "most efficiently and effectively drive the story forward for the audience." This includes elements such as the actors' expressions, camera movement, composition of the frame and the whole visual vocabulary at the director's disposal. For example, the system of continuity editing includes the element of the "match-on-action." In a match-on-action, an edit is made during the flow of a physical action, such as picking up a telephone or opening a door. While the viewer's eye follows the movement, the edit is virtually invisible. In the language of film, a match-on-action says that space and time are perfectly continuous across the edit. Teachers who take the opportunity to introduce students to key components of film language such as the frame, shot, sequence and scene, develop both their awareness and appreciation of film as a storytelling vehicle. As Bill Costanzo points out in **Reading the Movies**, this is quite consistent with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Commission on Media which "broadens the definition of literacy to include film and other media" (1992 p. 2). Though some people may still accept the old tenet that seeing is believing, in media literacy, seeing involves the concept of viewing critically. "Anyone can see a film...but some people have learned to comprehend visual images, physiologically, ethnographically and psychologically—with far more sophistication than others" (Monaco 1977 p. 125). For those who wish to force an artificial separation between these forms of storytelling, it is worth listening to what the creators themselves have to say. In terms of the children's picture book, another art form using both images and words, the relationship between saying and showing has been clearly documented. In a chapter called, "Painting with Words: Writing with Pictures" (Considine and Haley 1994), the authors explore the relationship between the languages. Author/illustrator Chris Van Allsburg, whose **Jumanji** is currently in release, sees an obvious connection between movies and picture books.

Robert Redford won the Oscar for best director for *Ordinary People*

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8 **News & Notes**

Media Focus

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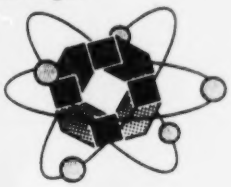


Literacy for the 21st century

Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"As I consider a story, I see it quite clearly. Illustrating is simply a matter of drawing something I've already experienced in my mind's eye...It is a unique medium that allows an artist/author to deal with the passage of time, the unfolding of events, in the same way film does. (Considine and Haley p. 125). Caldecott medal winner and the author of *Writing with Pictures*, Uri Shulevitz has described working on his own children's books: "The story unfolded in my head like a movie. I was the camera seeing the action conveyed by pictures." (Considine and Hayley p. 125). John Sayles directs, writes and edits his films including **Matewan, Brother From Another Planet, Passion Fish** and the recent **Secret of Roan Inish**. In his book, *Thinking in Pictures*, Sayles distinguishes between the process of both creating and comprehending stories told in print and picture. "One of the main ways that storytelling on film differs from writing fiction is that the choices you make are extremely practical as well as aesthetic and intuitive. I've never had to change a line of fiction because the sun was or wasn't out, because heavy machinery was operating in the neighborhood, or union meal penalty started in five minutes." (1987 p. 1X) For Sayles, "fiction relies more on imagination of the reader." Movies, he says, "seem to be imagination made solid...Thinking in pictures is a way to inhabit the bodies of characters as well as their minds. Trying to bring those pictures, those feelings to other people is a lot of what movie-making is about." (p. 8)

By selecting key moments in a story, teachers can explore the ways words and pictures are used to advance the narrative and our understanding of characters and events. By providing students with the opportunity to discuss the similarities and differences, we widen their understanding of these storytelling forms and our understanding of young people as audiences. In The **Great Gatsby** for example, how do students respond to Daisy's fascination for Gatsby's shirts, as Fitzgerald describes it, compared to the way Mia Farrow's Daisy shows it? How does Fitzgerald's use of symbolism like Dr. Eckleburg's eyes and the green light across the bay transfer to the screen in the hands of director Jack Clayton and writer Francis Ford Coppola? Another Coppola work worth exploring with middle school students in his rendition of S.E. Hinton's young adult classic, **The Outsiders**. The credits at the start of the film imitate those used in **Gone With the Wind**. While students may not know this they can be made aware of it and asked how it relates to the characters in the book. The killing of Bob also allows students and teachers to explore the decision the director made to not show the stabbing, employing instead subjective camera work from Ponyboy's perspective. Another novel that provides ample evidence of the way visuals can advance narrative is Judith Guest's **Ordinary People**, which won Robert Redford an Oscar as Best Director. Having worked with this film for many years, (Considine and Haley 1992), I was delighted to have the opportunity to discuss it with Judith Guest during a visit to Minneapolis. What I quickly learned was that what I regarded as the major visual components of the story (the broken plate, the napkin rings, Calvin's shoes) are actually not in the book. Redford used props, close-ups and consistent reference to those props to visually advance our understanding of the key characters, particularly Beth Jarrett's compulsive need for order and cleanliness. Even the body language is skillfully choreographed to distinguish between the characters. Watch Conrad's changing posture, gesture and expression during the family photograph sequence. It is visuals, not just words, that advance our understanding of the boy's relationship with his mother. Similarly, Beth's gestures as she takes off her golf gloves and holds on to her wrist, do more than a little to remind us of Conrad's attempted suicide. Finally, the relationship between dialogue and image is often a carefully balanced exposition of character and conflict. In **Psycho's** parlor sequence, for example, when Norman gives Marion her sandwich and milk, director Hitchcock uses camera angle (tilt up, tilt down), props, (the stuffed birds) and dialogue to expand his motifs. Marion's name is Crain, a clear reference to the birds, which is further amplified when we hear that she eats like a bird. Elia Kazan's **On the Waterfront** also employs skillful interplay between words and images to advance the narrative. When the priest visits the

dock to issue the last rites to a murdered worker, camera angle, lighting, words and props construct a religious allegory which includes references to both stoning and resurrection. Teachers wishing to introduce students to the language of film can use short scenes such as these which are readily accessible at most video stores and which have the added advantage of avoiding screen violence and obscenity so prevalent in many of today's films. Once they have learned to recognize these elements of film grammar, students will easily locate them in their own recreational viewing of movies as well as during longer classroom screenings.

Of course it is also important to note the obvious fact that movies are also told through the spoken word which a writer has initially committed to print. While it has been observed that "the most effective way of telling a story on the screen is to use the camera as the story-teller" (Bordwell, Straiger, Thompson 1985, p. 24), the voice-over narrator has been used to great advantage both in the past and in recent films like **How to Make an American Quilt** and **The War**. As such, the narrator can be used to anchor a study of film to American literary classics. *Moby Dick*, for example, opens with the words, "Call me Ishmael." Nick Carraway introduces himself at the beginning of *The Great Gatsby*: "In my younger and more vulnerable years, my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since." **Legends of the Fall** opens with the Indian storyteller: "Some people hear their own inner voices with great clearness." Harrison Ford introduces himself at the start of **Presumed Innocent:** "I am a prosecutor. I am part of the business of accusing and punishing. I explore the evidence of a crime and determine who is charged." Recognizing and understanding this technique can be used not only to explore the literary elements of film, but also to encourage young people to develop diaries, journals and first person narratives (see box).

Narrators and voice-overs

The use of the voice-over narration including first person and second person accounts has a long tradition in American motion pictures. For young people today, movies featuring teen-tellers may serve to stimulate their own creative writing, while other examples can deepen their appreciation for the art of writing for the screen. Here are some examples from the opening of movies, that students and teachers can work with.

Risky Business: "The dream is always the same. Instead of going home, I go to the neighbors. I ring, but nobody answers."

The Outsiders: "When I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the movie house."

Member of the Wedding: "It happened that green crazy summer when Frankie was 12 years old. This was the summer when for a long time, she had not been a member."

What's Eating Gilbert Grape?: " My brother Arnie's about to turn 18. My family's planning a big party for him."

Good Fellas: "To me, being a gangster was better than being president of the United States.

A River Runs Through It: " My father was a Presbyterian minister and a fly fisherman.

Sunset Boulevard: " Yes, this is Sunset Boulevard in Las Angeles, California. It's about 5 o'clock in the morning. That's the homicide squad..."

Gilda: " To me a dollar was a dollar in any language. It was my first night in Argentina and I didn't know much about the local citizens."

Manhattan: "Chapter 1. He adored New York City. He idolized it out of all proportion. No, make that he romanticized it out of proportion."

Equus: " Afterwards, he says, they always embrace. The animal digs his sweaty brow into his cheek and they stand in the dark for an hour, like a necking couple."

The Valley of the Dolls: " You've got to climb Mt. Everest to reach the valley of the dolls. It's a brutal climb to reach that peak."

All About Eve: " The Sara Siddons Award for distinguished achievement in theatre, perhaps unknown to you."

The Barefoot Contessa: " I suppose when you spend most of your life in our profession, you develop what could be called an occupational point of view."

Other suggested titles: **Love Story, Summer of '42, Matewan.**

Motion picture images used in this issue of *Telemedium* courtesy of Museum of Modern Art, Movie Star News and British Film Institute. Used with permission from *Telemedium*

Media and violence: David Buckingham

There was a great deal to celebrate in late April when the Faculty of Education at McGill hosted a one-day seminar on media education. There was very little chance that the day could be anything but excellent, given that the guest speaker was David Buckingham of The Institute of Education, University of London, England.

Watching and listening to Buckingham interact with the young people in the audience was truly inspiring, for it illustrated how effective teaching about the media can be.

Buckingham spoke powerfully about the renewed debate over media and violence in Great Britain, and it was very clear that even though he showed absolutely no sign of deferring to or "talking down" to the students in the room, his remarks were not lost on them. It was a tribute to both Buckingham and his young audience that they listened intently as he spoke about his latest research.

The James Bulger case renews the British debate around violence. Buckingham traced the events immediately following the tragic and brutal murder of the young child in Britain, and pointed out that it eventually came down to a debate about the media.

In his summation, the Judge stated that it was the violence in the film, "Child's Play III" which may have played a role in the Bulger murder, although Buckingham pointed out that there are no similarities between the events of the murder and events in the film. This, nevertheless, led to calls for censorship in Britain, and in 1994, legislation was passed to counteract "video nasties" there.

Buckingham used the term "moral panic" to describe what actually went on around this event and referred once again to a tendency to blame the media for undesirable social developments. This tendency is not new and dates back to when Plato wrote about the young poets of the time, specifically Homer. What is disturbing about this kind of response is that it is based in the belief that there is *one* explanation for an undesirable situation.

The question of children's emotional response to what they watch on TV is a concern to many parents.

The question of children's emotional response to what they watch on TV is a concern to many parents. However, Buckingham's research shows that the young people he spoke to did not take the violence seriously, nor did they see it as very realistic. In talking about horror, the young British students showed a mixture of distress and delight—quite typical of the horror viewer. They draw a distinction between fictional and factual violence, and Buckingham's conversations with them indicate that they are upset by *factual* violence.

On censorship and violence

Events around the Bulger murder combined with his own research have lead Buckingham to oppose some aspects of censorship. While he agrees that there is a need to censor certain kinds of materials, he points out that parents make different judgments in different ways and for different reasons. "Theirs are not the same as politicians' concerns and so, lines should be drawn concerning censorship."

As for the argument that TV violence causes violent behavior, Buckingham stated that we all imitate things we see on TV—both good and bad. Where there are cases of pathological copy-cat acts, he stressed that there it is generally a combination of factors at work. He reminded the audience that there is still no conclusive evidence that television violence causes people to be more violent than they would otherwise be. Even proponents of the argument against television agree that causes of violent behavior are multiple.

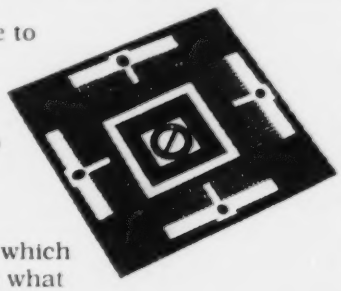
Regulating the media

Buckingham was convincing in his contention that a centralized censorship of the media is no longer a realistic option. He stressed that,"We need different strategies and they need to be positive and educational." He reminded his audience again that violence in the media has always been a concern. There is no time in history when there were no representations of

BOX 1

Why the V-Chip will not work

- Skepticism about whether it will work technically
- Installation—it will only be on new sets which are likely to be the main set in the house. The secondary sets which are more often used by the children will not have the V-chip.
- Difficulty in adjusting for differences in ages in a family
- Assuring that children will not be able to operate the V-chip
- Designating someone to code and categorize every single program raises questions about who will do this and who will pay for it to be done.
- Establishing criteria which will make sense with what people watch



violence in society; therefore, it is a fantasy to promote the belief that TV created violence in society and that censorship is the solution to the problem.

Digital technology is creating massive implications for regulation. One of these, Buckingham pointed out, is a result of how decentralized the Internet is. There is growing alarm about computer pornography and while the number of young people using the Internet is still fairly low, it promises to climb quickly. There is cause for concern around this issue as the newer technologies make this content more easily available, especially in the home.

The V-chip debate

Buckingham referred to the Telecommunications Act in the U.S. which deregulates the media and weakens the power of the FTC and the government to regulate the airways. More and more regulation is happening in the home with parents blocking access to objectionable material. However, what is lacking, Buckingham notes, is a positive strategy. He calls upon governments to find a way of providing something better.

In arguing against the V-chip, Buckingham expressed great concern that instead of reducing the amount of violence in the media, it will give producers license to produce more of what we do not want to see. They will simply direct people to their V-chips to censor themselves and go on producing questionable content.

For the process to work, Buckingham argues that there needs to be public approval. Parents need to be on board as most people do not want others making decisions for them and their children. For all these reasons, he emphasized that people need to be better informed.

He notes that in the US young people are very poorly served as a media audience where the fare is dominated by animation tied into commercialism. While there is Cable-TV and it is better, it does not reach poor audiences. Yet despite the reality that children are poorly served, Buckingham sees little active positive action being taken in the US to change the situation. He observes that the Canadian picture is somewhat better.

In responding to the question of whether there is a future for regulation, Buckingham concludes that, "They're chasing an impossible dream because of the technology."(JB)

BOX 2

What will work

- In the UK education is the answer.
- A positive strategy producing an informed audience, but not a strategy which sets up education as another form of censorship
- A safeguard against another way of "defending" or "protecting" children from the media
- An approach which begins by listening to what children know

McGill seminar a grand success

What sealed the success of this day was the fact that participation at this seminar was not limited to educators and researchers. The audience included a large number of secondary students, most between the ages of 12 and 15. In fact, there were more students than teachers which created an almost magical quality to the discussion. For media education enthusiasts and teachers who have repeatedly witnessed this magic in their classrooms while teaching the media, the powerful responses of the young participants was no surprise. However, even the most seasoned teacher cannot help but marvel at the insight and knowledge students reveal when they talk about the media.

Watching these young people listen and respond confidently to David Buckingham was enough to convince the most cynical that media education not only inspires active learning, but also provides young adults an effective forum for expressing their opinions and exploring the opinions of others.

Students respond enthusiastically

Following Buckingham's keynote address, participants were divided into two groups—students and teachers—and given different assignments, both dealing with violence in the media and censorship. The large groups were subdivided into smaller working groups to complete their assignments.

During the afternoon session, Buckingham continued his address and invited participation and comments from the audience. Many of the comments came from the students who were eager to share their concerns about horror and the media. Discussion centered around the film, "Child's Play III," which was at the core of the Bulger case.

Students' revealed a level of sophistication about the media and technology which would no doubt surprise many adults. The young people showed a true understanding of the limitations of censorship, specifically the V-chip. One young participant speculated that it would probably not take long for young viewers to figure out ways to outsmart the V-chip. Another 14-year old pointed out that there was too much panic over violence and the media. "I grew up watching *Tom and Jerry* and I never did anything violent. Why would any other kid do things I didn't do?"

Many realized, too, the technological limitations of people older than themselves. One young participant wondered, "Do we need to educate the parents instead of the kids?" Most were good-natured about their parents' lack of computer savvy. One girl chuckled as she recounted patiently helping her mother gain competence on the computer. In a calm voice, she recalled how she tutored her mother. "No, Mom, you have to double click." (JB)

Screening images: Ideas for media education

... for Worsnop, the screens are in the viewer, not in the text.

In April, The Centre for Literacy hosted a one-day media education workshop featuring Chris Worsnop, author of *Screening Images: Ideas for Media Education*, *Popular Culture*, and the soon-to-be released, *Family Lessons in Media Education*. Worsnop was English Coordinator in the Peel Board of Education in Ontario for 20 years and is currently a consultant in the Toronto area.

The participants, primarily secondary school teachers, represented both the public and private sectors. Most were convinced about the potential of media education and are already teaching about the media.

Worsnop began by making a distinction between the terms "media literacy" and "media education" explaining that he prefers to use the latter because the term "media literacy" implies that that there are ills to be cured. This is not at all the purpose in teaching about the media. For Worsnop, education *through* the media is very much a part of education *about* the media, and he uses the word "text" to describe any piece of information.

Worsnop pointed out a key concept about media education: "You have to take a second look. Looking at something again reveals different images." As he explained, when you look a first time, depending on what you are expecting to see, you see something. Taking a second look often reveals more than what was there the first time. This contention explains why he uses the word "screens" a great deal in his writing and his teaching; for Worsnop, the screens are in the viewer not in the text. He believes firmly that, "When you sharpen up visual acuity, you sharpen up visual comprehension."

Making it happen in the classroom

He walked participants through a number of practical exercises using his own handouts, as well as newspapers, photographs and drawings—all very low-tech teaching aids. He used these to illustrate that many resources are free or available at a very low cost.

Chris Worsnop

Worsnop stressed the importance of embracing a new critical approach to teaching the media—one which does not demand a "correct" answer. He encouraged teachers to talk about the importance of angles and lenses in their conversations about the media.

He emphasized that no text is neutral or value-free and stressed that, "We need to be sensitive to, not always critical of, these values." He cautioned that too often we are not mindful of a tendency to criticize and reminded participants that we must be very conscious of whether we assent, resist or enter into negotiation with media images.

The role of assessment

The last part of the day was devoted to assessment and media education. This is becoming increasingly critical to the discussion; previously, media education had been considered to be a rather unimportant subject. Few educators saw that it afforded any possibility for true learning. Little thought had been given to a rigorous system of assessment since most people believed that media education was an opportunity for students to get away with doing very little. Worsnop's work shows that media education is a subject which needs a strong method of assessing the work students do.

He described for participants the assessment tools he has developed inviting them to discuss their responses (See *Media Focus*, Winter 1996). (JB)

REVIEWS

The Media of Mass Communication, John Vivian, Third Edition Allyn and Bacon (Needham Heights, Mass.: 1995), 496 pp.

by Dr. Lyle Cruickshank, Dawson College

In the introduction, John Vivian asserts that his book "represents many new approaches for introducing students to the media of mass communication." In fact the book does just that and has already been adopted in several hundred colleges and universities as the text of choice for mass media courses.

Written in a precise, get-the-information-across style, the book is attractively designed with full color on most pages. It comprises eighteen well organized chapters covering every medium of mass communication known to human kind. Virtually every use and every related issue is described and discussed. Chapter one provides an orientation for the reader, and subsequent chapters deal with each major medium in the sequence in which they developed historically: books, magazines, newspapers, movies, sound, radio and television. Emerging technologies such as miniaturization, digital and other technologies and satellites are not forgotten. The second half of the book focuses on media research, theories, effects, law and ethics.

Each chapter ends with questions for review, suggestions for further reading and a feature which I find particularly promising: "Questions for Critical Thinking."

Most of us who are involved in teaching have attended useful sessions where our colleagues have enthusiastically shared their latest success in using a mass communication medium. The essence of teaching is interpersonal communication, but the inherent attractiveness of motion pictures and magazine articles help us to be entertaining while teaching, and John Vivian is a useful guide to the industries behind this phenomenon.

The book includes stories about people who contribute significantly to the mass media and who exemplify important aspects of media operations.

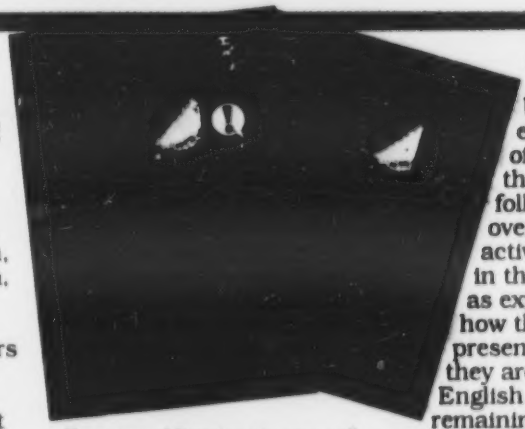
Learning goals for each chapter are clearly specified and study previews are included to prepare the reader for the material ahead. The book is so complete in its examples and layout that the unwary teacher may be lulled into a dangerous complacency.

North American mass communication is dominated by the United States. That is where this book comes from, and American content totally dominates its pages. The word Canada never appears. There is no reference to the Canadian story or individual, with the exception of Marshall McLuhan whose famous name appears on pages 9, 10, 307 and 394. And Hank Snow's song, "Hello Love" is mentioned in the introduction to the chapter on Radio. But media teachers in Canada know how to work around the lack of Canadian content in American textbooks. For example, the television tycoon, Ted Turner, is quoted on page 189, predicting the end of newspapers within ten years. This is the perfect opening for a discussion of our own Conrad Black who now owns the controlling interest in the Southam chain of newspapers and who was quoted in Macleans magazine recently, saying, "... not once have I developed a cold sweat because I'm in the buggy whip business."

In summary, John Vivian and the editors at Allyn and Bacon have given us a superbly designed and useful American textbook, one that I hope to use in an introductory Mass Communication course.

Formerly an executive with the NFB, Lyle Cruickshank teaches Cinema at Dawson College.

Teaching Viewing and Visual Texts - Primary, 156 pp
Teaching Viewing and Visual Texts - Secondary, 132 pp
By Rod Quin, Barrie McMahon, Robyn Quin, Curriculum Corporation, Dolphin Press (Australia, 1996)



Media education teachers have been decrying the lack of useful, effective resources; however, that seems to be changing slowly. Some things, fortunately, never change, and one of these constants is that we can continue to count on Australians Quin and McMahon to produce teaching materials that meet the needs of media educators in almost any English-speaking country.

The latest of their contributions is the two-volume series, *Teaching Viewing and Visual Texts - Primary* and *Teaching Viewing and Visual Texts - Secondary*. Both texts deal with the crucial and often forgotten visual mode of communicating messages, and they address the current technologies which include videos, movies, computer and CD-ROMs and of course, the "ubiquitous information superhighway." The authors are acutely aware of the immediacy and impact of these media.

Because Viewing is one of the strands identified in the English Curriculum in Australia, these texts are appropriate for use in Quebec where media education is situated in the English Language Arts Curriculum. One of the most inspiring comments is made in the Introduction where the authors point out that:

"...First is the belief that the principles involved in teaching reading and teaching viewing have much in common. Second, and as a corollary is the belief that many of the understandings and skills which teachers already possess about teaching reading are directly applicable to teaching about visual texts and visual language."

Both volumes, attractively presented with colourful and appealing graphics on the front covers, share the same format so that they can be used with ease. Part One of each contains the Introduction followed by an overview of activities contained in the text as well as explanations of how the ideas are presented and how they are related to the English program. The remaining topics in Part One are the same in both volumes and are addressed at the level appropriate to the volume.

There are three parts in each volume; however, topics in Parts Two and Three differ because the texts are level specific. In the Primary volume, Part Two presents *Activities for lower primary classes* which include "Exploring visual language," "Visual stories" and "Texts and reality." Part Three, *Activities for upper primary classes*, includes "Interpreting visual texts," "Visual conventions," "Stereotypes," and "News and information."

These topics progress naturally to the activities presented in Part Two of the Secondary volume. These include "Visual conventions," "Narrative," "Genre" and "Audience and readings." Part Three provides a more intense analysis of genre, stereotyping and conventions of the media with activities.

Both volumes are presented in an interesting and appealing manner with a combination of graphics, drawings, actual work samples of student writing and screens to illustrate activities. Units feature suggested learning outcomes, pointers to assist teachers with assessment and supporting activities. Both volumes end with a Glossary of Terms and a long listing of Resources for Teachers; the Secondary volume also contains a listing of Resources for Students.

These books are a valuable tool for all media education teachers, notwithstanding the Australian references. Teachers can easily adapt by using local references. (JB)

All reviewed texts are available at The Centre for Literacy.

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NEWS & NOTES

National and international conferences

1996 National Media Literacy Conference
"Citizenship in a Media Age: Media Literacy and the Common Good"
October 3 - 6, 1996
UCLA Conference Center, Los Angeles, California
Hosted by the Center for Media Literacy, Los Angeles. Inspired by the 1995 conference sponsored by the National Telemedia Council at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, this conference will expand the groundswell of support for media literacy through conversation and collaboration with growing numbers of religious, family and youth service agencies.
Information: Centre for Media Literacy, 4727 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 403, Los Angeles, CA 90010 Tel. 1-800-226-9494, (213) 931-4177; Fax (213) 931-4474

Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) Media Education National Conference
October 3 - 6, 1996
Queensland University of Technology
Queensland, Australia
Information: Media Education National Conference, (ATOM) Milton, Queensland, 4065, Fax 07.3832.1329. E-mail: CapalabiaSHS@mailbox.uq.qa.au

UNESCO International Forum of Researchers Young People and the Media, Tomorrow Problems and Viewpoints
April 21 - 25, 1997
Paris, France
This forum is designed to continue the work begun at the first World Summit of Children's Television in Australia in March 1995. Subjects will reflect the shared concerns of participating nations with special attention to under-developed countries and to those becoming democratized. Topics include multimedia and the development of new technologies and information technologies. Languages will be French, English and Spanish. Simultaneous translation will be available.
Information: Research Group on the Relationship Between Children and the Media, Château de Longchamp, Bois de Boulogne, 75016 Paris, France Tel. (33-1) 44.30.20.01, Fax (33-1) 45.25.73.67

Notes

Scanning Television: Videos for Media Literacy in Class, produced by John Pungente, S.J., Neil Andersen, and Gary Marcuse, is a 4-video cassette package featuring 40 short video clips selected from a variety of Canadian sources as well as some from Warner Bros. The package is accompanied by a Video Teacher's Guide with suggested uses for the excerpts.

A recommended companion to the "Scanning Television Video Package" is the text, *Mass Media and Popular Culture* by Barry Duncan, Janine D'Ippolito, Cam Mcpherson, Carolyn Wilson. Information: Harcourt Brace & Co., Canada, 55 Horner Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M8Z 4X6

• A reminder that "Prime Time Parent," a kit designed for use by parents, is also a valuable tool for teachers interested in promoting media education in the classroom for students of all ages. The kit may be borrowed for two weeks from The Centre for Literacy.

How to Cope with the Impact of Television on Children:

An Evening With David Bianculli,

TV/critic for *The N.Y. Daily News*

David Bianculli, TV/critic and author of *Teleliteracy*, will address parents, educators and researchers.

Date:
Monday, October 7, 1996

Time:
7:30 p.m.

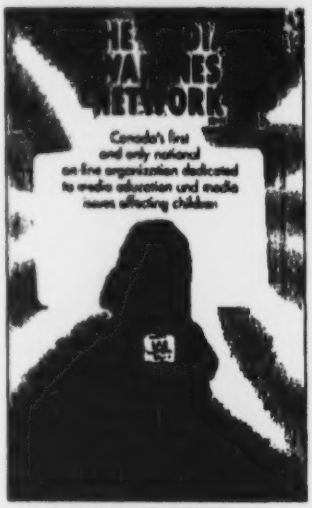
Place:
The Centre for Literacy

Information:
The Centre for Literacy, (514) 931-8731 ext. 1415

Mark your calendar!

Introducing The Media Awareness Network

Joining the list of Canadian media resources is The Media Awareness Network, a unique bilingual service on the Internet's *World Wide Web* and linked directly to schools through *SchoolNet*. A clearinghouse and interactive network devoted to media literacy and other child-centred media issues, the Network describes itself as a key source of Canadian content which provides impartial service and support for quality Canadian children's media and for relevant public education initiatives.



The Media Awareness Network originated at a 1993 CRTC-sponsored meeting on children and television violence where interested parties asked the National Film Board to set up a clearinghouse that would support media education and address public concerns about the influence of media on children and youth. Now, the Media Awareness Network is ready to:

- Support curriculum based media education in Canadian schools, providing a key communication link for a national media education strategy.
- Help families, especially parents, effectively manage the home media environment.
- Build partnerships for media awareness across a broad spectrum of interest groups.
- Promote public support for the production and distribution of quality Canadian children's media—television, film, video games and computer software.

For more information, call 1-800-89-MEDIA or (613) 992-5380
Fax (613) 947-2537 or
E-mail: a.taylor@nfb-onf.ca

On-Line Speakers Roster
The Media Awareness is planning an on-line speakers' roster database via Internet for anyone interested in speaking on-line about issues related to the media and media education. If you are interested in being on the roster of speakers or for more information, contact: Gayle Snyder, Information Services, Media Awareness Network, 179 Rideau Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A ON9 Tel. (613) 996-4775 Fax (613) 947-2537 E-mail: g.snyder@nfb-onf.ca.

Vol. 12 No. 2 • 1996

Literacy across the curriculum

Including Medi Focus

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

Women and literacy

Design by Moon Joyce for CCLOW

"Educational attainment in and of itself does not contribute to the gender differences [noted in various North American assessments] because there are no gender differences in attainment in Canada. "

This is the conclusion of the Canada report on the IALS regarding literacy and gender — a surprising one considering the widespread belief that women generally have lower literacy levels than men and face greater barriers in trying to attain education. Are these perceptions founded in fact, or are they merely popular misconceptions?

For people who like neat equations and pat answers, entering the world of literacy is a little like being lost in the funhouse. The way through is never clear, and you always risk walking into a wall or worse. As an example, the question of women and literacy leads one into a labyrinth of confused terms and faulty comparisons.

Confusing the terms

Part of the confusion begins with the continual reference to UNESCO statistics about illiteracy. Recent studies cite figures of one in three women compared to one in five men worldwide. They also note that in 1990, of 130 million school-aged children not attending school, two thirds were girls.

Although these figures come mainly from developing countries, Canadian journalists will frequently begin a local interview citing them and asking how they apply to Canadian women. Even local literacy

INSIDE

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8 What is a feminist curriculum
10 Why a women's curriculum
12 Resources: Gender, women
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14 Profiles of ABE students
15 Conferences
17 Announcements

The Centre for Literacy Montreal, Quebec

Literacy across the curriculum

The Centre for Literacy
3040 Sherbrooke Street West,
Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
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Editor: Linda Shohet
Layout & design: Ponctuation GRAFIX
(514) 733-5924

Dépot légal – 1991

ISSN 1192-3288
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The Centre for Literacy/Le centre d'alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada, and Dawson College.

Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

practitioners will cite UN figures without providing a context.

The use of the words literacy and illiteracy are also problematic. In developing countries, there are millions of people who are illiterate— who have had no access to schooling and no exposure to written language. For social, cultural, economic and political reasons, a majority of these are women.

In the industrialized world, less than 2% of the population is illiterate. The IALS does not even discuss illiteracy. It discusses levels of literacy beginning from very low and moving along a continuum to very high. It tries to measure the ability of people in technological societies to perform a range of specific tasks requiring skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

The problem is that the media, the general population and a substantial number of literacy practitioners are using a framework from the developing world to explain an entirely different situation in the West. This results in unsubstantiated claims about astronomical levels of "illiteracy" in Canada. The most common route to this conclusion is by adding together the percentages of IALS respondents who performed at the three lowest of the five levels even though these are not measures of illiteracy.

In this context, do Canadian women then have particular problems and needs in relation to literacy?

The answer is yes, but not because there are significantly more women in need. It is partly because their needs are often different from those of men and partly because they do face greater barriers in attaining education, especially as adults with limited prior education. There is also a North American social pattern of placing a disproportionate responsibility for family literacy on the mother and of blaming women if their children do not learn well in school.

This issue of *LAC* looks at some of the issues of women as learners by examining the reasons for paying attention to their needs (Davis, p. 10) and by reviewing the recent Canadian publication of a women's curriculum (Nonesuch, p. 8 and In the Classroom, p. 6). They suggest that educational practice which is sensitive and responsive to women benefits both women and men as learners. The list of resources (p.12) offers a selection of materials on the topic that can be borrowed from The Centre for Literacy.

This issue also offers a critical comment on the IALS by historian Harvey J. Graff (p.4-5) who argues that the survey has ignored the best of literacy research in the past two decades, including a large body of ethnographic research that has examined literacy as it affects actual lives. [LS]

1 On women's ways of learning

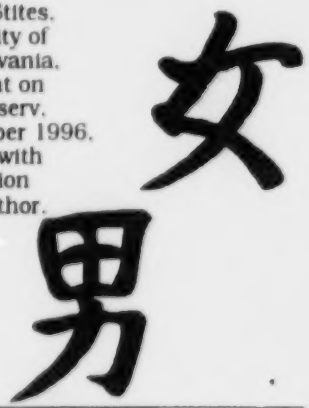
But what if we were to recognize the capacity for distraction, the divided will, as representing a higher wisdom? Perhaps Kierkegaard was wrong when he said that "purity is to will one thing." Perhaps the issue is not a fixed knowledge of the good, the single focus that millennia of monotheism have made us idealize, but rather a kind of attention that is open, not focused on a single point. Instead of concentration on a transcendent ideal, sustained attention to diversity and interdependence may offer a different clarity of vision, one that is sensitive to ecological complexity, to the multiple rather than the singular. Perhaps we can discern in women honoring multiple commitments a new level of productivity and new possibilities of learning.

Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Life*, (A Plume Book, Penguin, New York 1990) p.166.

2 On integrating literacy work: the Chinese example

On the other hand, I am also dismayed by the turf battles that separate adult and early elementary educators. I spent many years studying literacy campaigns in China and I believe we could learn something from the three-pronged strategy underlying those campaigns. In China, literacy work has three parts: blocking, sweeping, and raising. Blocking refers to improving primary education to ensure that the next generation is literate. Sweeping refers to providing basic literacy education to all adults who need it, and raising refers to providing continuing education opportunities to all adults. The terminology may be troubling (sweeping away illiteracy is a bad metaphor), but the underlying idea of linking early primary, adult literacy, and continuing education is sound. We should all support the goal of ensuring that all children achieve literacy by the third grade. There is much research to show that this is a critical point in a child's education. At the same time, there is a strong case to be made for linking quality issues in primary education to quality (and access) issues in adult literacy education. The two goals are complementary, not competing. That is the message we should be sending.

Reggie Stites, University of Pennsylvania, comment on NLA listserv, September 1996, printed with permission from author.

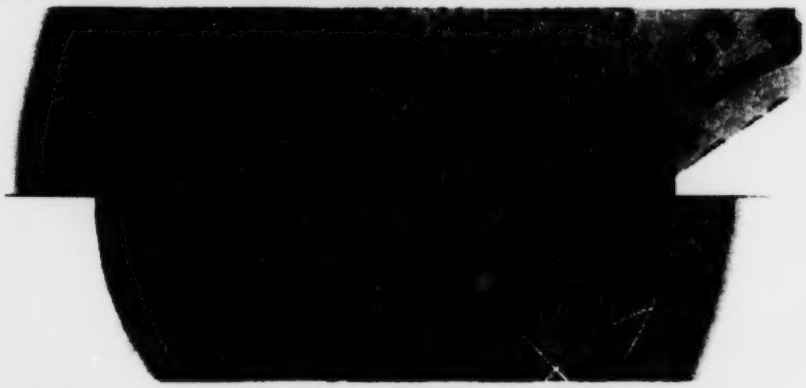


3 On supply and demand for adult literacy instruction in the U.S.

The demand for literacy instruction should be estimated from current participation rather than from assumptions about who should want such training. Indicators that would justify projection of a dramatic increase in the demand for literacy skills are difficult to find, hence making it difficult to gauge the adequacy of supply. Federal [US] funding increases have been related in the past to dramatic increases in basic skills enrollments, but the likelihood of such large increases in the future is small. Furthermore, we have insufficient data for predicting how different levels of funding would interact with the various identified barriers to further participation. Noticeably absent is a comprehensive understanding of how adults with low literacy skills perceive the potential returns on further literacy training. The high dropout rate now experienced in adult literacy programs indicates a rather large mismatch between what adults expect from such programs and either the efforts required to reach these goals or the content of many literacy programs.

The demand for ESL training by immigrants will probably remain strong for many years, as will ABE training for many of these same people. Furthermore, if travel and child care problems are barriers to participation in adult literacy programs, newer instructional technologies may increase demand for instruction. In particular, those technologies that would allow adults to continue skills training in their homes could make a major difference on enrollments. For this to occur, however, existing programs would need to reconfigure their curricula and their service provision techniques to allow home study to be effective.

Richard L. Venezsky & Daniel A. Wagner, *"Supply and Demand for Adult Literacy Instruction in the United States," Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol 46, Number 4, Summer 1996, pp 205-206.



IALS
EIAA

The persisting power and costs of the literacy myth

[LAC has invited some prominent international literacy researchers to comment on the IALS report. This is the first of a series which will appear in consecutive issues.]

A Comment on *Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the First International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).* Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development and Statistics Canada. (Paris and Ottawa. 1995).

by Harvey J. Graff, University of Texas at Dallas

Themes in IALS

Literacy, Economy and Society is a landmark achievement with respect to international cooperation and comparison (albeit within a narrow band of nations); focus on adults; technical virtuosity of measurement, data-gathering and processing, and presentation; and tone of scientific certainty. About that, there is no doubt.

The report unmistakably marks and is marked by the historical moment in traditions in social developmental research and capabilities of social science, by the presumptive place of literacy and education within them, and by the current fin-de-siècle sense of threat and malaise, East and West.

In its first paragraph, the report intones the post-World War II developmental consensus: "In recent years, adult literacy has come to be seen as crucial to the economic performance of industrialized nations." Reflecting a shift in awareness of recent decades, it continues: "Literacy is no longer defined merely in terms of a basic threshold of reading ability, mastered by all those growing up in developed countries. Rather, literacy is now seen as how adults use written information to function in society."

The fears engendered by the press of the times appear next: "Today, adults need a higher level of literacy to function well: society has become more complex and low-skill jobs are disappearing. Therefore, inadequate levels of literacy among a broad section of the population potentially threaten the strength of economies and the social cohesion of nations." Not surprisingly, the report states that these are "high stakes." The study clearly acknowledges its dependence on Irwin Kirsch's U.S. Educational Testing Service 1993 *Adult Literacy in America*. However, whereas Kirsch's study attracted great media attention even outside the U.S., the new report, interestingly, has sparked relatively little in North America. [This comment was written before release of Reading the Future, The Canada report on IALS. ed].

Format of IALS

Literacy, Economy and Society is a handsome volume. It presents its information attractively. That tabular and graphic modes of expression dominate over the far fewer words, however, is unremarked (although arithmetic ability is included in the study). This presentation raises implicitly the possibility that newer literacies linked to the numerical, graphical and visual exceed the power of traditional alphabetic

literacy. Does this mark a sign of late twentieth-century literacy that is sometimes misconstrued as a "decline in (print) literacy?" Or does it more directly contradict the design, measures, and conclusions of the international study with respect to literacy abilities and needs today and tomorrow?

Problems with IALS

These questions only begin to suggest the problematic character of *Literacy, Economy and Society*. More than two decades of critical, empirical, and theoretical work—a significant amount of which focuses on or includes literacy — is neither acknowledged nor allowed to influence the study's design, conduct or reported conclusions.

This distance, indeed segregation, of the study from significant, sometimes seminal, critical research and commentary is more than revealing and unfortunate. It limits the questions asked as well as the underlying and overarching assumptions about the place and power of literacy by itself. It also limits the interpretation of the empirical indicators and the fuller interpretive web of meanings in which the conclusions may be located and made to speak.

The important historical dimension—my own area of expertise— is ignored (if sometimes wrongly permitted to creep into notions of present and future), as are path-breaking recent studies, many of them ethnographic, on the actual contexts in which literacy is valued, acquired, practiced, used, abused or neglected.

Recent research, ranging from the historical like my own to Shirley Brice Heath's or Brian Street's ethnographic studies, among others, qualifies notions of literacy as skill, in part through their awareness of multiple literacies; of great inequalities in opportunities to gain, practice and improve, and use those literacies; and of the simultaneous difficulty, complexity and limits of literacy.

Quantitative and comparative research can certainly be employed for contextual study and interpretation, but in more flexible design and interpretive modes than *Literacy, Economy and Society* employs. These measures neither can nor need bear all the investigative and interpretive weight their research tradition places upon them.

Economists now see literacy in more complex connections and contexts too. Literacy alone seldom correlates accurately or meaningfully with job attainment and performance (whereas it links more directly to social origins and opportunities). A great many jobs in rapidly expanding sectors of service-driven economies require little literacy. Traditions of taking literacy by itself — including the narrow and sometimes naive economism the study reflects — no longer merit our attention. In overvaluing literacy taken out of its actual contexts, both literacy and lives linked to it are diminished unnecessarily, as Mike Rose in particular shows.

The research cited and the great revision in thinking about literacy challenge, qualify and contradict the science and certainty of *Literacy, Economy and Society*, from the assumptions of its first paragraph to its last. Ironically, or perhaps not, the results of IALS needlessly circumscribe themselves as they reveal, to borrow my own phrase, the persisting power and costs of the literacy myth.

Harvey J. Graff is a historian who has studied and written about literacy for more than 20 years. Among his books are *The Labyrinth of Literacy: Reflections on Literacy Past and Present* (Plenum Press, 1989), *The Legacies of Literacy* (Indiana University Press, 1991), and *The Literacy Myth* (Transaction Publishing, 1991).

Literacy and television

Table 3.24
Proportion of respondents by level, prose scale, who identified television and newspapers as major sources of information, Canadian adults aged 16 and over.

Prose scale	Do you get a lot of information from... newspapers?	television?
Level 1	26%	71%
Level 2	42%	69%
Level 3	52%	70%
Level 4/5	49%	48%

Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada, p.74

Women and work

[These activities appear in Women and Work, a chapter in the CCLOW curriculum *Making Connections*. The chapter was based on an original draft by Selvi Dyck, revised and completed by Evelyn Battell, Janet Isserlis and Kate Nonesuch, when Selvi was unable to continue the project. Reprinted with permission.]

A. Hands and Skills

The point of this exercise is to make learners aware of all the tasks they do in a day, particularly for others.

1. Analyze ordinary tasks

The skills and "hidden" skills may not be apparent to learners immediately. Be prepared to take a good amount of time, encouraging learners to work in pairs or small groups to develop their lists of both obvious and hidden skills.

➤ Ask any learner to describe all the things they do in a day, perhaps suggesting "cooking breakfast" and "taking children to school" if they seem to have difficulty getting started.

➤ After this list has been completed, ask learners to reflect upon (and start to analyze) the skills needed in order to accomplish these tasks.

task	skills required	"hidden" skills
cooking breakfast	cooking	food shopping, budgeting, knowledge of nutrition, operating appliances
food shopping	list making, reading (labels, prices)	nutrition, budgeting, math
getting kids to school	driving or using transport	reading, operating a car, knowledge of traffic rules, bus routes

2. Collage

There is no predetermined focus here, other than to see the many ways in which hands will be used in the collages. Some hands, perfectly manicured and posed, will inevitably be placed in juxtaposition to working weathered hands. As well, learners can add their own drawings to the collages.

➤ Ask learners to think of all the things they do with their hands — from stirring pots to writing letters, brushing teeth and hair, changing diapers, driving cars, wrapping parcels, finding coins for machines.

➤ Write a list of everything they suggest on a flip chart.

➤ Gather as many magazines as you can and invite learners to create collages featuring hands. They can work independently or together.

➤ When the collages have been finished, ask learners to write something in response to the topic — poems, journal writings, personal recollections.

The only requirement here is to think about how hands are used to accomplish many, many things.

In the event that someone in your group is unable to use her hands, you may want to avoid this exercise. If, however, she is comfortable with the group, she may wish to talk about the ways in which she accomplishes the things she needs to do without having her hands available to her.

This activity grew out of an exercise suggested by Nina Wallerstein in "Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom."

3. Skills analysis

➤Ask learners to think specifically about the skills they use in doing things with their hands, and to expand their thinking to the skills they use in everyday life–budgeting, driving, reading, writing, speaking, thinking and so on. Ask them which skills are transferable from task to task, and which skills are specific to a particular task.

task	specific skills	transferable skills
driving	knowing how to operate a car	reading signs, judgment, reading maps, attentiveness
cooking	knowing how to combine foods and spices, use an oven	shopping, budgeting, math, measuring, organization

4. Poems

Read the poems "Concrete Fever" and "Think Like a Weightlifter, Think Like a Woman" from *Covering Rough Ground* by Kate Braid. (These poems are reproduced in *Making Connections*), The activities suggested below could be used with both poems.

➤ Read each poem aloud a number of times, perhaps reading sections as a group, or taking parts, or reader's theatre style, each student reading one sentence. Some questions to consider after each poem:

- What feelings does Kate have?
- What qualities does she demonstrate?
- How is she like you?

➤ Think about the attitude some people have to women doing this work. Some questions to think about:

- How would men in your life respond to a woman carpenter?
- Would they disapprove? Why or why not?
- Would they be supportive? How?
- Would they work well with a woman on the job?
- How would the other women you know react to a woman carpenter?
- Why do women want traditional male jobs?

5. Guided Imagery

➤ Introduce the activity by telling the learners you will ask them to imagine what a day would be like for a woman carpenter going to a union job as the only woman on the crew. Your voice is going to ask them to pretend to be someone else or to be themselves in a different situation, or to watch someone going through these motions. They do not have to report what they think or see.

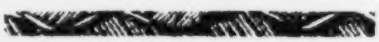
➤ Ask people to sit as comfortably and loosely as possible. They might want to move to the floor or lay their heads on a table or lean back, hands loose or loosely clasped.

➤ Explain that we are going to try to imagine a situation and we want to feel as many details as possible. We can't get this wrong. If the exercise helps us picture the situation even partly, we have succeeded. At the very least we will have a few minutes of quiet time to think!

➤ Read the script [the text provides a script about a day in the life of the only woman carpenter on a union crew] clearly and slowly. Whenever the script asks the participants to make a choice or do something, pause.

➤ Compare notes on the experience. Some questions to consider:

- What did you notice?
- Did you like the feeling of being a carpenter?
- What was new or different?



Learners might like to write a guided imagery for some trade they are familiar with— including being a housewife — and leading the other students through it.

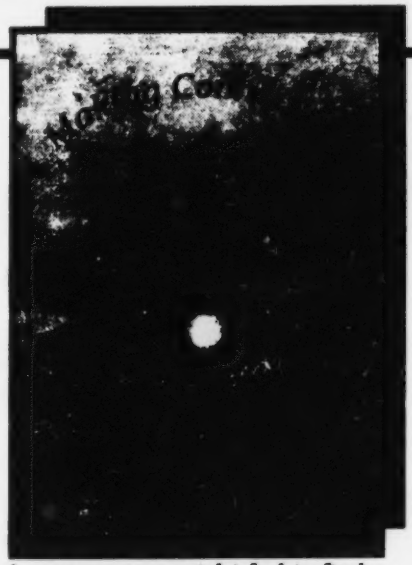
What is a Feminist Curriculum?

by Kate Nonesuch
[excerpt condensed from the Introduction to *Making Connections: Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective*. CCLOW Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1996]

If you have leafed through this book before reading the introduction, you've seen what's here — chapters on various themes, such as herstory, role models, self esteem, cross-cultural awareness, roles, everyday life, safer sex and work, as well as chapters organized around the genres of poetry and song and one organized around women's ways of learning....What makes this curriculum a feminist curriculum?

We put women at the centre of this curriculum

We asked ourselves from the beginning, "What ways of learning and instruction have we found to be most useful when working with women literacy learners?" We know that many of the same principles and methods are also successful when we work with men literacy learners. We also asked, "What issues are important to women?" Some of our chapters focus on the everyday lives of women, lives which are usually invisible, and where invisible, often undervalued. About more general issues, we asked, "How does it affect women's lives? Furthermore, "women's issues" are not just for women. Some men want to understand women's issues and learn best how to support women. For example, courses for women in trades and technology often prepare women to deal with sexism on the job; it is equally vital for men to learn how the traditional workplace discriminates against women and



how a woman might feel to find herself part of a very small minority on the job. Men may also want to learn how to deal with men who hassle women at work and how to make the workplace a welcoming one for women.

We are concerned with issues of diversity

A feminist curriculum is not a uniform curriculum. It aspires to include voices, experiences and values of all women, whether or not they would define themselves as feminist.

We are concerned with issues of power

Who has power, and how do they maintain it? Who has an opportunity for self-determination, and who is defined by those in power? The answers to these questions are not simple and involve race, culture, sexual orientation and ability as well as gender. They often raise problems of divided loyalties as we consider the various groups we belong to, some of which have more power than others.

Many men have similar issues around power, identity and control, especially men who are not white, middle class, heterosexual and well educated. Our curriculum makes space for people to consider such issues.

We make space for women's experience

We do not assume that the generic "he" includes all of us. For example, in the chapter "Choosing Safer Sex,"we say, "Use a condom." This is good advice for both men and women. However, we recognize that in reality men have much more freedom to make that choice than women do. We make sure we say clearly that in most heterosexual relationships, a man can say "I'm going to use a condom," without getting hassled, but if a woman says, "I want you to use a condom," her wishes may be denied. Then we invite women to share techniques for getting their needs met or we offer some assertive stances that may work, always recognizing that for some women the actual or potential violence in the situation means she does not have a choice. We make sure we say it out loud because it acknowledges women's real place in the power imbalance. Very likely, someone in the class will be in that situation. If we don't say it, we conspire to silence her.

We are concerned with emotions

The authors of the chapters in this book are at some pains to take into account the emotional needs of learners - validation of what they already know, safety, increased self-esteem and so on. In the activities outlined here, emotions are front and centre, acknowledged and analyzed. The acknowledgment and analysis of emotions, in western culture, have been the province of women; in institutions of learning, where for centuries women were banned, emotions were also banned. We put them back into the curriculum and say they are important.

Many men and some women may be reluctant to take part in such activities, and resist this part of the curriculum; they may say that such activities are not "real"

school. If a curriculum were "man-centered," we might dispense with or disguise exercises that, for instance, ask learners to remember what it was like to fail in school. In this curriculum, we say women are used to doing the emotional work in our society, it is important work and we will recognize it. In order to do good academic work, women need to have their feelings acknowledged, and their needs for physical and emotional safety met. In this curriculum women's need to deal with their emotions is given priority over some men's need to deny their feelings.

Of course, there are men in our classes who are ready and willing to take on emotional work, especially men who belong to Alcoholics Anonymous, or who have been in a treatment program for drug addiction. I once saw a student come away from a group of learners exchanging stories about what illiteracy had done to their lives. He was a tall, strong man, wearing a muscle shirt, upper body covered in tattoos, eyes red and teary, and reaching for his cigarettes. "Man," he said to a group of us sitting outside, "that crying really takes it out of you."

We try to tell the truth when the truth is hidden

The chapter called "Women of Courage: Herstory" is a great example. First learners are invited to notice that some groups of people are not in the history books, then to suggest some reasons for the omission. Many activities ask them to supply the omission, and finally to go out into their communities to share their new knowledge. However, it is not just in the past that women are hidden; every one of these chapters tries to bring out hidden aspects of women's lives.

Making Connections

was created by a group of literacy workers - First Nations women, women of colour, white women - from across Canada.

Introductory essays:

- What is a Feminist Curriculum? *by Kate Nonesuch*
- Women at the Centre of the Curriculum *by Janet Isserlis*
- Responding to Disclosure of Abuse in Women's Lives by *Jenny Horsman*

Chapters:

• Daily Lives by *Janet Isserlis* • Exploring Learning and Identity *by Jenny Horsman* • Self-Esteem and Literacy *by Dorothee Komangapik* • Gender Roles *by Kate Nonesuch* • Cultural Awareness Activities *by Alice Li* • Role Models *by Evelyn Battell* • Women and Work *by Selvi Varathappan Dyck, Evelyn Battell, Janet Isserlis and Kate Nonesuch* • Tools for Building Self-Esteem *by Francene Gillis* • Choosing Safer Sex *by Sue Mendel* • Songs about Women's Issues *by Dharini Abeysekera* • Poetry by Canadian Women *by Helen Winton* • Women's Ways of Learning *by Linda Shohet* • Women of Courage: Herstory *by Anne Moore and the Women's Group of Action Read*

Each chapter contains material for 20-30 hours of readings, activities and handouts for literacy and EAL learners. *Making Connections* includes a bibliography and audio tape of songs used in the text.

To order: *Making Connections* costs $24.95 plus postage, handling and GST. All orders will be invoiced. No pre-paid orders accepted. Contact Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON, M4E 2V6. Tel: (416) 699-1909; Fax: (416) 699-2145.

We try to tell the truth when the truth is difficult

The chapter called "Exploring Learning and Identity," for example, deals with the pain and violence, both emotional and physical, that many learners experienced in early school lives. Since this early pain may well affect learning in adulthood, making it part of the curriculum may enable some learners to move on to a more fruitful learning experience at this time.

We encourage women to speak in their own voices

The activities in this book encourage women to state their opinions, recognize the truth about their lives, what is good in them and what is not so good; the activities encourage women to talk to each other about their experiences, to see similarities in spite of differences, to make alliances and to work for change at a personal and/or political level.

What a feminist curriculum is not!

Finally, a feminist curriculum does not tell women what to think, how to live or what to do. It does not tell them they must change, or in what direction to move. Instead, it invites women to look at their lives and at the lives of others, to make connections between them and to think about issues of invisibility and power. A feminist curriculum does not tell women that everything is all right. It does not encourage women to change themselves in order to fit in better or to lie to themselves in order to feel better. A curriculum that suggests we change the women instead of changing the system is not a feminist curriculum.

A feminist perspective on literacy curriculum

by Fran Davis, Vanier College

In celebration of International Literacy Day, The Centre for Literacy in partnership with CCLOW hosted the Quebec launch of ***Making Connections*** *with a discussion called "Why Women's Curriculum?" with panelists, Greta Nemiroff, Fran Davis and Linda Shohet.*

A feminist curriculum for literacy and other-language learners raises some very important issues in education. The materials and approaches of the new CCLOW collection *Making Connections* are women-centred because by far the greatest proportion of literacy learners are women. Such learners have been prevented for various reasons from profiting from our educational system, and attention must be paid to their needs. It is clear that if educators do not consciously adopt the women's perspective in curriculum design, the perspective will certainly be men's.

Despite thirty-five years of pioneer work by feminist educators, the so-called universalist curriculum in schools, colleges, universities and alternative learning sites still speaks largely to, by and for men. Fierce debates have raged over this issue, particularly in view of the fact that, in general, girls and women are achieving greater success even in, and in spite of, this mainstream/ malestream curriculum. In woman-unfriendly arguments at the Cegep [Quebec college system], for instance, the statistics on women's greater success rates are used to suggest that women have received too much attention, and that we should now worry about the men.

It is imperative to recognize, however, that even among these Cegep learners, gender differences abound, and women may achieve high marks, win prizes and then drop out of programs where the curriculum fails to answer their deeper needs. When we see such women at the upper end of the educational scale seek their own curriculum, then we can be even more certain that where women are at a disadvantage, a curriculum that accommodates them is absolutely crucial.

Making connections at all levels

The readings, tasks and orientation of *Making Connections* address some of the characteristics of women learners which my colleague Arlene Steiger and I have begun to identify in our research. Our subjects have been Cegep science students, and we have come to think of their motivations and attitudes as representing a gender continuum, with greater numbers of women at one extreme and greater numbers of men at the other.

Over and over again, we have heard our women subjects describe experiences, learning needs, and educational expectations that are not only very different from those of our men subjects, but different from the expectations of their teachers and of the Cegep science curriculum.

In general, the women in our research tend to bring to their schooling a set of experiences which are highly interpersonal and interconnected: they do not compartmentalize their lives. Feelings and thoughts, relationships and learning, work and play — all are embedded in their daily lives, and they are very attuned to these aspects of one another.

This background means that their preferred learning modes are sociable and co-operative, and they are deeply sensitive to the atmosphere among students and between students and teachers. They also want well contextualized presentations of material so they can see how new knowledge connects to the complex networks of what they already know. They want their education to be "connected to life." In terms of expectations, over and over again, these young women have told us they want "to be somebody" and "to make a difference": they long for a transformative education which will allow them to grow and change, and they want to be able to pass on that largesse to others. They will study hard and do what is necessary to achieve extremely creditable results. But their hearts belong to the subject matter with which they can connect, whether it be biology because it addresses nature and the body, or literature because it addresses human lives. They want to "do" things, rather than "just study" them: they love to write, to paint, to play the piano, to do volunteer work looking after children - the handicapped - the poor - the aged.

Looking high and low

How does all this rejoin the feminist perspective of *Making Connections?* One glance through the table of contents tells the tale. Chapters which use thematic focuses such as "Daily Lives", "Cultural Awareness Activities", "Role Models", and "Choosing Safer Sex" speak directly to the need for contextualized learning. Chapters such as "Exploring Learning and Identity" and "Tools for Building Self-Esteem" speak to the longing for transformative experience.

In each chapter, the activities are designed to allow individuals to respond in their own voices, and to find a variety of forms of oral, written and artistic expression. Process is emphasized, and learning is dynamic and interactive.

Feminist educators often experience discouragement, given the resistance we encounter even to well documented research which cries out for educational change. Frequently, such educators are working in the universities, positions which ought to afford some power and influence. However, as the inspirational African-American feminist Alice Walker reminds us, perhaps too often we look on high for answers, when we ought to look both high and low.

It seems to me that a learner centred literacy text for women such as *Making Connections* - sponsored by an organization such as the CCLOW that seeks to connect women from every sphere of our society, is a model for the kind of outreach that we need.

Work for women where the need is greatest must surely be a priority of our times.

Fran Davis is an English teacher at Vanier College in Montreal. She is a poet and researcher who with colleague Arlene Steiger has been studying women science students at the college level.

Resources are catalogued and may be borrowed in person or by mail (postage covered by the borrower). Documents should be requested by number. Documents can be consulted in The Centre from Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

In addition to the materials listed in the catalogue, we have directories of program and services, bibliographies on many subjects, international periodicals and newsletters, catalogues of learning materials, tapes/videos, and hanging files. We are connected to the National Adult Literacy Database and Internet. Printouts on specific subject headings can be requested at cost.

Information: Peggy Killeen (514) 931-8731, local 1415; literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca.

1150.022 Bibliography
Belcher, Lisa and Jenny Hopkins, eds.*Bibliography on Women and Literacy*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, 1995

1150.057 Book
Belenky, Mary Field, et al. *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1986.

1150.072 Book
Breen, Mary J. *Taking Care: A Handbook about Women's Health*. Toronto, ON: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1991.

1152.002 Guide
Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women. *Telling Our Stories Our Way: A Guide to Good Canadian Materials*. Toronto, ON, 1990.

1150.052 Book
Chlebowska, Krystyna. *Knowing and Doing: Literacy for Women*. Paris, France: UNESCO, 1992.

1150.017 Book
Culbertson, Debbie, ed.. *Doing the Gender Boogie: Power, Participation and Economic Justice*. Toronto, ON: Ten Days for World Development, 1995.

495.007 Book
Darling, John, and Anthony Glendinning. *Gender Matters in Schools: Pupils and Teachers*. London, England: Cassel, 1996.

1150.007 Research report
Foxall, Justine F. *Rural Women, Literacy, and Participation in Economic Development*. Ottawa, ON:CarletonUniversity, n.d.

1150.050 Book
Horsman, Jennifer. *Something In My Mind Besides the Everyday: Women and Literacy*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press, 1994.

495.006 Book
Lee, Alison. *Gender, Literacy, Curriculum: Re-Writing School Geography*. London, England: Taylor & Francis, 1996.

1151.010 Book
Lloyd, Betty-Ann. *Discovering the Strength of Our Voices: Women and Literacy Programs*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1991.

1151.006 Book
Lloyd, Betty-Ann, Frances Ennis, and Tannis Atkinson. *The Power of Woman-Positive Literacy Action: Program-Based Action Research*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1994.

1150.018 Book
Nemiroff, Greta Hofmann, ed. *Gender Issues*. Toronto, ON: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1993.

1150.050 Instructional manual
Nonesuch, Kate, ed. *Making Connection: Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1996. **With AUD. 016**

1150.015 Conference report
Nurss, Joanne R., and Sarah B. Ketchum, eds. *Papers From the First International Conference on Women and Literacy*. Atlanta, GA: Center for the Study of Adult Literacy, Georgia State University, 1995

1150.032 Handbook
Ontario Literacy Coalition. *Women, Literacy and Action: A Handbook*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 1991.

1150.044 Report
Rockefeller Foundation. *Literacy and the Marketplace: Improving the Literacy of Low-Income Single Mothers*. New York, NY: Rockefeller Foundation, 1989.

1150.045 Book
Roman, Camille, Susanne Juhasz, and Christanne Miller, eds. *The Women and Language Debate: A Sourcebook*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994.

1150.076 Research report
SHELCOM. *Women in Transition: Seeking a Better Life*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1994.

495.005 Book
Swann, Joan. *Girls, Boys, and Language*. London, England: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.

The New Reading Disc:

A MULTIMEDIA RESOURCE

Following testing at 38 sites across Canada, The Centre for Literacy is pleased to announce that it has become the Canadian agent for *The New Reading Disc*.

The New Reading Disc begins from the premise that beginning readers are not beginning thinkers. People with reading difficulties are often expert language users when they are talking or listening, but have a specific problem with written language. *The New Reading Disc* allows learners to:

- create their own text by selecting words and sentences (with the support of audio) and choosing subjects of interest (with the support of pictures and video).
- print out their work and practice reading what they have created.

What is the content?
There are four generative activities:

- **Writing an article**
- **Constructing an argument**
- **Letter writing**
- **Exercises**

The New Reading Disc contains exercises which can be used on the computer, or printed out and used as worksheets. Built on the database of words and sentences already in the system, the generic exercises include sentence completion, cloze procedure, dictation, alphabetic sorting and comprehension activities. You can create customized materials using the Author. There are also assessment exercises based on UK standards.

What is the Author?
The Author is a tool on *The New Reading Disc* which allows you to add new sections, exercises, sound, pictures and video on any subject you choose. So you can apply the principles of *The New Reading Disc* to the realities of your own place and situation.

What technology do you need?
To run *The New Reading Disc* you need the following equipment:

- Multimedia personal computer (MPC) with
- 486SX 25 MHz processor
- 8-bit Soundblaster sound card
- Speakers/headphones
- SVGA monitor
- Dual-speed CD-ROM drive
- Microsoft Windows 3.1 or higher

(Less powerful machines will run the *The New Reading Disc*, but at slower speeds.)

For prices, call (514) 931-8731, local 1415

The New Reading Disc Authoring Workshop

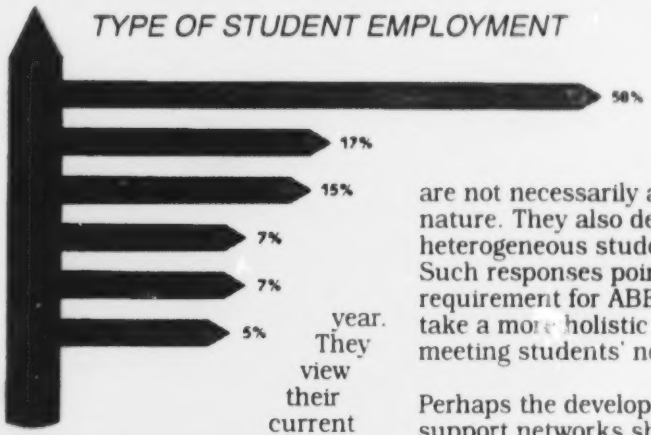
Date: Saturday, January 25, 1997
Place: Montreal
Facilitator: Lesley Crichton
Cambridge Training and Development, UK
Time: 9: 00 -4:00
Fee: $200
Information: (514) 931-8731, local 1415
This workshop will teach you how to use the Author tool to customize the Disc for local programs.

Profiles of ABE students: A provincial study

[A study of Adult Basic Education (ABE) students from twelve British Columbia colleges was conducted through a series of three surveys between September 1994 and October 1995. Among the questions they posed were: How successful is ABE in meeting the needs of its students? What difficulties do students encounter? How can ABE be improved? The following excerpts provide an overview of the findings.]

Two distinct groups of students emerge from the findings: those students who attended up to six months (short-stay) and those who attended seven to thirteen months or longer (long-stay). The profiles of these two groups demonstrate the variety of backgrounds and goals ABE students have. Short-stay students tend to be younger, recent school attendees who work more while going to school and move into university level programs quite quickly. Long-stay students have been out of school longer, are more likely to need financial assistance, attend full-time and complete more ABE courses.

What were students doing 13 months after starting ABE?
Most (59%) of the short-stay group were employed, while most of the long-stay group (70%) were still going to school. Of those who were not attending school at the thirteen month point, over half (64%) planned to return within a year. They view their current employment as a pause in their journey, not the destination.



What about the students still going to school? What programs were they enrolled in?
Of this group, 38% were taking more ABE courses, 31% were enrolled in university level courses, 21% were attending career or technical programs and 3% were enrolled in English language training. Generally, most of the short-stay respondents still studying were taking university level program (41%) and most of the long-stay respondents still studying were taking ABE courses (49%)

How can ABE programs better meet students' needs?
Survey responses reveal that, if problems occur, they are likely to be related to external factors that are not necessarily academic in nature. They also describe a very heterogeneous student body. Such responses point to the requirement for ABE programs to take a more holistic approach to meeting students' needs.

Perhaps the development of support networks should be considered for tailoring the programs to meet students' needs. Some suggestions include:

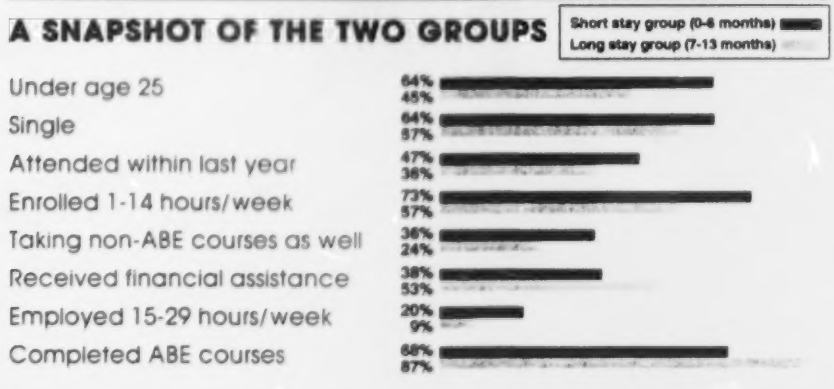
1. More point-of-entry counseling to assess and discuss students' goals, financial support, childcare arrangements, etc.
2. More discussion of time requirements so students do not over-extend themselves with work, family and study expectations.
3. Ensure a more supportive environment, especially for students beginning at the Fundamental and Intermediate levels of ABE.

Collecting data on incoming students, tracking their progress and following up on students who leave prematurely — as this study did — is an important strategy to promote student success.

For most students, ABE is just a step along the way, one that is crucial as they move towards their goals.

For a copy of the complete report, contact: The Advanced Education Council of British Columbia, Suite 950-409 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 1T2. Tel: (604) 895-5080; Fax: (604) 895-5088.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE TWO GROUPS



Chronological Conference Listing

Local

PAPT-PACT Annual Convention
November 14 -15, 1996
Palais de congrès
Montreal, QC
Information: Rod Elkin, 694-9777 or outside Montreal 1-800-361-9870

Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec
22nd International Conference
March 13 -15, 1997
Montreal, QC
Information: Tel: (514) 847-1324; Fax: (514) 281-5187

SPRINGBOARDS '97
Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) & Quebec Reading Association (QRA)
April 18 -19, 1997
Longueuil, QC
Information: Ann Board, Tel: (514) 697-6320; Fax: (514)697-5908

National/International

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
1996 Adult Education Conference
October 30 - November 2, 1996
Charlotte, NC
Information: AAACE, 1200 19th Street, NW, Ste. 300, Washington, D.C. 20036, Tel: (202) 429-5131; Fax: (202) 223-4579

College Reading & Learning Association
October 30 - November 3, 1996
Albuquerque, NM
Information: Tel: (303) 556-3057; Fax: (303) 556-2159; e-mail: ORLANDOV@MSCD.EDU

1996 Ontario Council of Teachers of English, Communications and Language Arts (OCTECLA) "English and Change: Bridging the Gaps"
October 31 -November 1, 1996
Toronto, ON
Information: Alex Bostock, Notre Dame Catholic High School, 12 Malvern Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4E 3E1, Tel: (416)393-5501; Fax: (416) 393-5631

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
86th Annual Convention
November 21 - 24, 1996
Chicago, IL
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096

Association for Community Based Education (ACBE)
21st Annual Conference
November 22 - 24, 1996
Monterey, CA
Information: ACBE, 1805 Florida Avenie, NW, Washington, D.C.20009, Tel: (202) 462-6333

Modern Language Association (MLA)
December 27 -30, 1996
Washington, D.C.
Information: Convention office, MLA, 10 Astor, Place, New York,NY 1003-6981; e-mail: convention@mla.org

1997 4Cs Winter Workshop
January 4 - 7, 1997
Clearwater Beach FL
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096

British Educational Technology (BETT)
January 8 -13, 1997
London, UK

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
March 11- 15, 1997
Orlando, FL
Information: TESOL, 1600 Cameron Street, #300, Alexandrai, VA 22314, Tel:(713) 836-0774; Fax: (703) 836-7864

College Composition and Communication
March 12 -15, 1997
Phoenix, AZ
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096

Microcomputers in Education: Mastering the Electronic Classroom
March 17 -19, 1997
Tempe, AZ
Information: Barbara Ford, Arizona State Univ., Box 870908, Tempe, AZ 85287-0908, Tel: (602) 965-7363; Fax: (602) 965-8887; e-mail: mec97@asu.edu; WWW: http://MEC.ed.asu.edu/97/

The Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning
March 24 - 26, 1997
Ottawa, ON
Information: Canadian Alliance for Lifelong Learning, Tel: (613) 993-2810; Fax: (613) 941-1164; e-mail: call@gsro.carleton.ca
Web Site: http://gcll.carleton.ca

British Dyslexia Society
Fourth International Conference "Dyslexia: Biological Bases, Identification and Intervention"
April 1 - 4, 1997
University of York
Information: BDA Conference Office, Department of Psychology, University of York, YO1 5DD, UK

International Reading Association
42nd Annual Convention
May 4 -7, 1997
Atlanta, GA
Information: IRA, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE, USA 19714-8139, Tel: (302) 731-1600, ext 226; Fax: (302) 731-1057

Learned Societies
Theme: "Communications"
May 31 -June 14, 1997
Memorial University
Information: Tel: (709) 737-4360; Fax: (709) 737-4449; e-mail: learneds@morgan.ucs.mun.ca

NCTE College Section Summer Institute
"Technology and the Teaching of Literature"
June 1 - 4, 1997
Myrtle Beach, SC
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096

The 13th Computers and Writing Conference
Kapi'olani Community College, University of Hawaii
June 5 -9, 1997
Honolulu, Hawaii
Information: Computers and Writing Conference\1997, Arts and Science Department, Kapi'olani Community College, 4303 Diamond Head Road, Honolulu, HI 96816, e-mail: cw97@lahi.kcc.hawaii.edu

Canadian Library Association
June 18 - 22, 1997
Ottawa, ON
Information: CLA, 200 Elgin Street, # 602, Ottawa, ON K2P 1L5, Tel: (613) 232-9625; fax: (613) 563-9895

UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education
"Adult Education: A Key for the Twenty-First Century"
July 14 -18, 1997
Hamburg Germany
Information: UNESCO Institute for Education, Feldbrunnenstrasse 58, 20148 Hamburg, Germany, Tel: (+49 40) 44 80 41-0; Fax: (+49 40) 410 77 23; e-mail: uie@unesco.org

10th European Conference on Reading
"Literacy, A Human Right: Bringing Cultures Closer"
August 3 - 5, 1997
Brussels, Belgium
Information: Albert De Smedt, Conference Secretariat, Mechelsbroekstraat 9, B-2820, Bonheiden, Belgium.

The Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking
has announced its 1996-97 series of workshops and conferences. Topics include: Writing to Learn, Writing and Thinking, Writing to Learn Math and Science, Teaching Women's Writing, Arguing Differently, and more...
Information: Bard College, P.O. Box 5000, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, USA 12504-5000.
Tel: (914) 758-7484.

International Reading Association (IRA)
World Congress
July 21 -24, 1998
Ocho Rios, Jamaica
Information: IRA, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, Tel: (302) 731-1600 or 800-336-READ.

Software Evaluation Service

The Centre for Literacy offers an open invitation for teachers and tutors to book appointments to preview a selection of 65 software products in adult literacy and basic skills, from producers in Canada, the US and the UK. Resources include software from Autoskill International, CTAD, Curriculum Associates, Interactive Knowledge, Tom Snyder Productions, TRO Learning and many more. STAPLE, The New Reading Disc, A Day in the Life, Oregon Trail II are among the recent favourites.

Call 931-8731, local 1415, or fax 931-5181 to make an appointment or to request a list of software.

PUBLICATIONS

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Montreal, Quebec,
H3Z 1A4.

Information on special price for multiple copies:
(514) 931-8731, local 1415.

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96/97 THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY & DAWSON COLLEGE WORKSHOPS AT A GLANCE

The 1996-97 workshops and seminars provide both theory and practice for teachers, tutors, trainers, curriculum planners, researchers and students.

Forging a workplace education delivery system: Rhetoric vs. reality or Finding a place for basic skills

(in partnership with Literacy Partners of Quebec for their Annual General Meeting)

Leaders: Bob Bickerton, State Director of Adult Education, Massachusetts
Date: Thursday, November 7, 1996
Time: 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

"But I'm not a therapist"—Literacy work with survivors of abuse

[in collaboration with Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women CCLOW (QC)]

Leader: Jenny Horsman
Date: Saturday, March 8, 1997
Time: 9:00 a.m - 3:00 p.m

Technology for literacy: Making hardware and software meet your needs

Leader: Chris Hopey, University of Pennsylvania
Date: Thursday, April 17, 1997
Time: 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Literacy, health and professional liability

Leaders: Deborah Gordon, Program Coordinator, National Literacy and Health Program, Canadian Public Health Association
Carolena Gordon, Partner, Nicholl Paskell-Mede, Avocats-Lawyers
Date: Friday, January 17, 1997

RESCHEDULED WINTER 1997

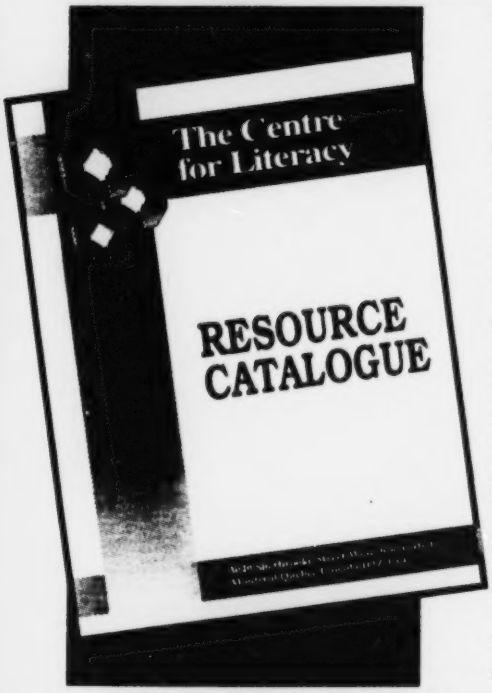
The Canadian Literacy Thesaurus updated

The Canadian Literacy Thesaurus/ Le Thesaurus canadien d'alphabétisation has been updated. The second edition with 1,890 descriptors in English and 1,950 in French, contains 270 more descriptors than the original 1992 edition.

The thesuarus is a bilingual, standardized vocabulary designed to help in organizing and finding documents in the field of adult literacy. Developed in consultation with the Canadian literacy community, both the terminology and the structure of the thesaurus reflect the diversity of regional literacy practices and activities in Canada.

The thesaurus is useful to individuals who wish to access literacy collections, index their own materials, or familiarize themselves with the terminology in the field. As one of the few thesauri specific to the field of literacy, it is also of interest to librarians and practitioners worldwide as a useful reference tool for literacy resource centres, libraries with collections in literacy, and literacy databases.

To order please contact: The Canadian Literacy Thesaurus Coalition, c/o Centre FORA, 533, rue Notre-Dame, Sudbury, ON P3C 5L1. Tel: (705) 673-7033; Fax: (705) 673-5520.



The Centre for Literacy announces publication of its Resource Catalogue

The Centre for Literacy has an open collection of materials on all aspects of literacy, accessible to any interested member of the public. Users can borrow many items.

The collection contains more than 7000 discrete items including books, periodicals, journals, newsletters, software, and catalogues, as well as a set of vertical files with articles, brochures, clippings, unpublished reports, and other kinds of information, much of which is not included in traditional library collections.

This catalogue offers a partial listing of almost 3000 of the items available at The Centre for borrowing or consulting. The subject headings have been assigned over the past two years using the Canadian Literacy Thesaurus with a small number of additional subject categories to reflect the broad nature of our collection which extends beyond adult literacy.

Prices
In Canada
$25.00 CAN, includes p & h
In the US
$25.00 US, includes p & h
Overseas
$25.00 US (surface mail).

Please inquire for airmail rates.
To order: Send cheque or money order payable to The Centre for Literacy to The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, QC, Canada, H3Z 1A4.

NCTE announces conference in Montreal:

- What do we mean when we talk about a reflective classroom, a reflective student and a reflective teacher?
- What practices foster reflection? How do we know that these practices are productive, and what do we mean by productive?
- What challenges do we face when we introduce reflection and how might we overcome them? Are there other challenges that characterize long-term efforts at reflective learning and teaching and how might we accommodate those?

Expanding the Conversation on Reflection: Innovative Practices, New Understandings, Current Challenges

a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference for educators from all levels K - College

June 26 -28, 1997

co-sponsored by The Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) & The Centre for Literacy

Information: NCTE Professional Development Services, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL61801-1096. Tel: 1-800-369-6283 or (217) 328-3870, ext.203. Fax: (217) 328-0977; E-mail: pds@ncte.org

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Centre for Literacy 1997 Summer Institute June 24 - 26, 1997
(immediately preceding NCTE conference)

Literacy and Technology and the dialogue goes on...

Since 1990, The Centre has run a summer institute that brings together teachers, tutors, policy-makers and workplace trainers in a collaborative setting to pose problems and consider solutions to issues connected to literacy.

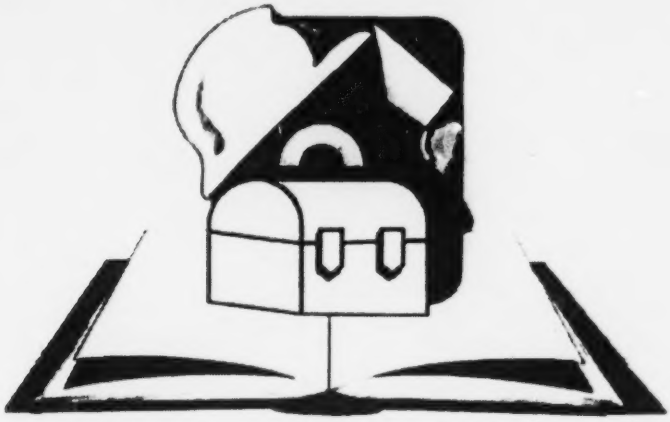
In 1995 and 1996, the theme was literacy and technology.

The conversation will continue in 1997.

(Details available January 1997)

A Resource for Libraries

The Literacy Tool Kit



This kit was produced for libraries interested in initiating literacy programs in their communities or enhancing programs that already exist. Developed by the Regina Public Library and the Saskatchewan Library Association with funding from The National Literacy Secretariat, the Tool Kit is an exquisitely packaged set of 4 modules designed for librarians, library technicians, directors and board members. Regina has the experience of having set up one of the earliest library literacy programs in Canada. Now all libraries can benefit from their learning.

A handsome carrying case is subdivided into four sections. Module 1 provides the rationale for linking libraries and literacy; Module 2 outlines the steps to initiate a program; Module 3 gives practical ideas to assist in each step of the process; and Module 4 provides extra reference tools. The contents have been divided into smaller readable booklets which can be read one by one.

Among the topics covered are Needs Assessment, Program Planning and Evaluation. Supplementary materials in Module 4 look at needs of specific populations including rural communities, older adults, aboriginal peoples, and people with special needs. It also touches on literacy and technology.

A Guide explains how to use the Kit. It also has a reference list of articles and books on libraries and literacy.

The most accessible resource available on the subject, every library needs one.

Price:
Saskatchewan Public Libraries: $50
Others: $100
Shipping/handling charges of $10 plus GST will be added.

For information or to order: Patti Kelm, Project Coordinator, Business Literacy Unit, Regina Public Library, P.O. Box 2311, Regina, SK, Canada, S4P 3Z5.

Dyslexia and criminal offenders

Researchers in the United Kingdom have found that there were strong indications of dyslexia in 52% of criminal offenders surveyed, as compared with 4 -7 % of non-offenders. Similar research in the U.S. indicates that at least twice as many young adults in the criminal justice system show signs of dyslexia as those in the general population.

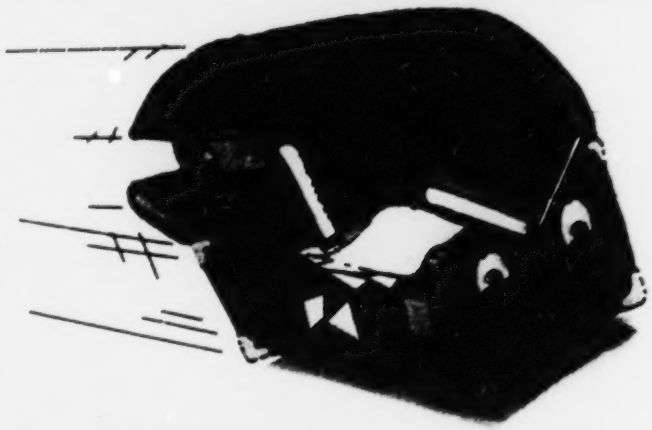
Dyspel is a pilot project begun by the Inner London Probation Service, the London Action Trust, and the London Language and Literacy Unit. The project focuses on identifying and addressing dyslexia as a factor in criminal offending and breaking the pattern of underachievement, frustration, and low self-esteem that often characterizes people with undiagnosed dyslexia. Participating probation officers screen clients at the presentence stage; those with a strong indication of dyslexia are then referred to specially trained tutors for a diagnostic assessment and individual tutoring and support.

Data from the project will be used for research into dyslexia and the effects of diagnostic intervention. Evaluation of the project will lead to the publication of guidelines for policy on dyslexia and offenders.

Information on Dyspel: Cynthia Klein, Project Director, London Language and Literacy Unit. Tel: 011-44-171-639-9512.

Reprinted from *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 40:2, October 1996, p.100

Travelling Resource Trunk on Literacy and Learning Differences and Disabilities



The Centre for Literacy, in partnership with the **Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG),** has developed a travelling resource trunk of materials on literacy and learning disabilities for teachers and tutors who do not have easy access to resource centres because of time or distance.

This kit is based on one developed by the LD Work Group of the New England Literacy Resource Center (NLERC) which gave us permission to copy several binders of teacher materials. We have added a number of Canadian and British resources.

The kit contains books, articles, worksheets, and evaluation instruments on many aspects of LD. They touch on literacy, numeracy and technology. A second kit on new materials in literacy is being developed for QLWG in the fall of 1996.

Two LD kits are now circulating in Quebec — one reserved for QLWG members and one available to any school or community-based organization which requests it. They may be kept for three weeks. Transportation will be the responsibility of the borrower. Priority is given to requests from outside Montreal

Information: Call (514) 931-8731, local 1415; Fax (514) 931-5181; e-mail: **literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca**

To subscribe, complete this form and mail it with your cheque to:

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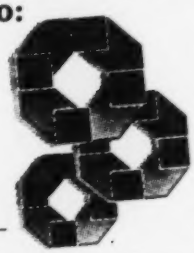

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Literacy Across the Curriculum

is published four times during the academic year by The Centre for Literacy

LOOK AT OUR WEBSITE AT: **http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm**

VOL 6 No. 2 • 1996

Media FOCUS

THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY

Traditional Versus New Television

by Robert Kubey

Looking at the history of media effects, there is considerable evidence that the media have often engendered two opposing social trends simultaneously.

Let's take traditional television and the family as an example. There is as much evidence to show that television brings families together as that it rends them apart (Kubey, 1990). Actually it clearly does both things, often in the same family, often in the same day or hour. At one moment we are brought together by television; at another moment we go to different rooms to follow our different preferences.

Similar contradictory forces will be at play with the interactive media coming our way. Many contradictions are already occurring [See BOX 1].

If some, or most, of these oppositional tendencies continue, then we will learn once again that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Gender differences

Technophiles often miss the human elements, the individual and mass predilections behind behavior, that drive and explain both the opposing tendencies listed below and the inevitable controversies.

There also are ingrained cultural and biological factors that underlie communication behaviors It's my hunch that if you gave a primitive man a TV monitor and a remote channel changer, before long, primitive man would have changed channels more often than primitive woman.

After all, research suggests that males tend to scan the environment more and are more likely to be aroused by visually stimulating material. These, very possibly, are largely biologically, hard-wired phenomena. Males in general, compared to females, also seem to crave control and speed. These phenomena are much more likely to be largely socio-cultural, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BOX 1

CONTRADICTIONS

New Telecommunications Technologies:

• drive us apart.	• bring us together.
• privatize our lives.	• help build community.
• isolate us politically.	• promote activism.
• injure children psychologically.	• help children psychologically.
• provide superficial knowledge.	• increase in-depth knowledge.
• leave people with no sense of local or geographic place, community and identity.	• increase our sense of local or geographic place, community and identity.

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5 **David Bianculli in Montreal**

6 **High school award winning video**

7 **REVIEWS: Dictionary of Tele-literacy & Tabloid Journalism**

Medi FOCUS

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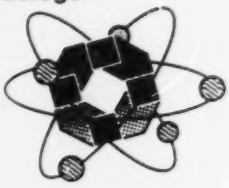
The Centre for Literacy - Le centre d'alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada, and Dawson College.



Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

there may be little or no enduring biological substrate at work.

Still, anecdotal evidence from a variety of cultures indicates that males almost everywhere change channels more often than do females.

Patterns and trends

Media habits are also substantially influenced by enduring features of how we live, when we work, how daily life is structured, even factors such as how we respond to the weather. In the U.S., for example, on any given weekday evening about one-third of the U.S. population is watching TV. In the winter when there is less daylight and people spend more time indoors, the fraction of the population watching television rises to one-half.

Work patterns dictate how much time people have available to be in contact with the leisure oriented media and different forms of information and entertainment. While these patterns are changing for some, they are not about to change radically for most people in the near future.

Why 500 channels?

There are only so many hours in the day, a fact consistently lost on the technophiles and business interests predicting and promoting the idea that we will soon have 500 channels. Where is all the time going to come from to support 500 channels?

It is true that in industrialized countries, people are much more likely to engage in "time-deepening" (Scheuch, 1972), that is they engage in more than one activity simultaneously. Still, there are only so many hours in the day and only so much information that anyone can reasonably attend to or transmit. Orrin Klapp's (1986) extraordinarily perceptive book, Overload and Boredom: Essays on the Quality of Life in the Information Society, points to many of these same limits on human cognition and processing.

And why is the number "500" so frequently mentioned? The very fact that so many people bandy about such an incredibly round number should raise our suspicions as to how much thought—almost none I would suggest—has really gone into these projections.

The ideas that computers will completely displace television, whether it be in the near future or even in a few decades, or that people will soon watch and interact with television very selectively and discriminately, are unfounded in my view. So is Gilder's notion that consumers will retrieve precisely the information and entertainment that they want and that this will cause the sensationalism of "media junk food." His view that human beings will be attracted to more high culture and valuable information if only given the chance is hopeful and optimistic, but in all likelihood, wrong.

Public and university libraries have long been reservoirs of information, but how many people spend much time in the library or have even learned to use a library well? Yes, the Internet offers easier access to some information than did the traditional neighborhood library, but if people were nearly so thirsty for information and books as Gilder claims, libraries would be packed and the consistent slashing of library funding over the last decade would have caused a public outrage.

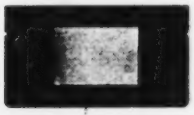
Television technology allows for a great deal more discrimination in viewing than it did only 15 years ago but this potential has not been realized in a manner congruent with Gilder's hopeful predictions. The vast majority of Americans now have cable

What the experts say

Consider what experts say. Take what Andrew Lippman of the Media Lab at M.I.T. wrote in a formal memo to Representative Edward Markey: "Forget television sets. In three years there won't be any. Instead, there will be computers with high-quality display screens" (In Gilder, 1994, p.180).

Or Nicholas Negroponte: "The traditional 'mass media' will essentially disappear" (Brand, 1987). Or the predictions of George Gilder (1994), author of Life After Television: "TV will be irrelevant in a world without channels, where you can always order exactly what you want when you want it"(p. 21)...All the media junk food and filler that stretches out toward the horizons of mass culture like so much strip development will tend to disappear." (p. 67)

and own a VCR, yet how often do people use these innovations to plumb the depths of video information, entertainment, or film already available?



The VCR —just a phase?

At conventions of video store operators, participants repeatedly observe that half the homes in the U.S. have VCRs that are blinking "12:00." This means that no one in the household has yet made the effort to learn to program the clock, and by extension no one in the household can program the VCR to tape asynchronously. This story is a consolation for those in the video rental trade as it tells them that they do not yet have a great deal to fear from cable or the coming of more pay-per-view and complicated digitized services. Most people still prefer to rent their videos from a store and bring them home. How many VCR programming-challenged people there are is an uncertainty, but I do know Ph.D.s and professors with computer background who have confided that they cannot—or have never learned to—program their VCR.

In short, people do not always use technology in the ways that the prognosticators would have us believe. I have found myself, on occasion, beginning to get sucked into a film being run on cable and watching it to its conclusion when I already had the film on tape in the same room. I could have watched it every day over the past few years yet the tape has sat on the shelf; but when it came on over the air or via cable, I began to watch.

I am not alone. Some people report that they like the fact that millions of others are watching the same program or film simultaneously. Suffice it to say that there is still a place for traditional television scheduling and mass dissemination even in the face of new superior communication and television delivery systems that some would have us believe are going to completely alter how we view. They will not.

People enjoy passivity

Some of my skepticism about the future of interactive tele-communications is based on my research which has shown that people use television more for escape, and for entertainment and distraction, than for information gain (Kubey, 1986; Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

As David Westin, president of production for Capital Cities/ABC Inc. recently said, "People want to come home and relax and be entertained by their television set. They don't want to have to program it themselves" (Carter, 1994a, p.11C). What people have always gotten from television, and what they will continue to want, is novelty and predictability simultaneously. Novelty in a safe context— in a box — fundamentally, that's what TV is.

Studies have shown that people in the U.S. don't want 500 channels. Few cable viewers watch the majority of the 35 - 100 channels they already receive and most prefer 30 - 40 channels that they like and from which they can pick a smorgasbord of choices. But even then, research indicates that they gravitate most of the time to 5-7 favourites. Except for those with very peculiar interests in television or scads of time, who needs 500 channels?

What people have always gotten from television, and what they will continue to want, is novelty and predictability simultaneously. Novelty in a safe context— in a box — fundamentally, that's what TV is.

In response to these tendencies, most cable channels have begun to define themselves keeping in mind that viewers are most likely to keep returning to channels with a definite, memorable identity. Viewers want to know what they can expect from a channel whether it be CNN, C-SPAN, MTV, Nickelodeon, or BET.

Simple economics precludes adequate financial support for 500 channels. To assume that consumers will rachet their price resistance levels ever upward is a huge mistake, one that some executives still haven't learned. As early as May of 1994, the New York Times was already reporting that the growth of new cable channels had slowed substantially because the number of available subscribers had begun to level off. Industry analysts predict that cable channels that reach "only" 20 to 30 million subscribers may be in substantial trouble. To be good for advertisers a channel currently needs to get close to "45 million" (Carter, 1994b).

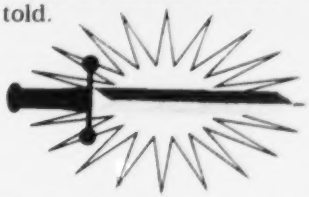
A related problem, seldom considered, is that there may be real limits on the amount of talent that can be brought together to make all the programs necessary to fill so many new channels. Hollywood already often sees itself as being short on talent. Susan Harris, the creator of "Soap," "Benson," and "The Golden Girls," reports that one summer she nearly jettissoned a new situation comedy pilot because she simply could not find an attractive, solid young male actor who could carry the lead in a comedy (Kubey, in press).

The rule of social familiarity also pertains to news. In news and magazine programs, the use of an anchor person is required nearly everywhere in U.S. television where they command multimillion dollar annual salaries, so critical are they to the success or failure of the program. There are those who will argue that this points to a lack of imagination on the part of the television producers, but there does seem to be a decided preference on the part of audiences to have someone familiar to lead them in and out of stories, however briefly. Even a program such as "60 Minutes" that on the surface appears to be a hard-hitting news magazine is, subtextually, as much about the highly familiar reporters (Mike, and Morley, and Ed, and

Leslie) riding herd on one outlaw or another. By segment's end we see the perpetrator hogtied and struggling.

In dramatic programming we like knowing the history and tendencies of the coarse detective with the heart of gold on "NYPD Blue," or the wily and self-effacing "Columbo," or the self-absorbed mother on "My So Called Life." And we love to watch them follow the line of their character.

So, it's a foregone conclusion for this observer that familiar people will continue to be featured in a great percentage of programming. This will not change whether it be 5 or 500 channels. And one can bet that first and foremost, stories will be told.



The story and the storyteller

After language, storytelling is perhaps the activity that distinguishes us most from other species. Storytelling about ourselves and our experiences permits us to structure our worlds and make meaning of them, and this is not about to change.

People particularly like good stories, which is why one must be extremely dubious about the future viability of viewers interacting with stories to produce plot developments and endings that they choose. People don't want to know the ending, and they don't want to create the ending. They like being surprised, within reasonable limits and established storytelling conventions.

To be sure, there's a place for interactive stories in imaginative computer games or in games such as "Dungeons and Dragons," but one wonders about the viability of gimmicks we've seen offered over the last few years, and being proposed for the future, that are only poorly disguised attempts to find a new way to gain an audience.

Audience members like placing themselves in the hands of a greater storyteller, or in the case of film or television, in the hands of a great screenwriter, producer, or director.

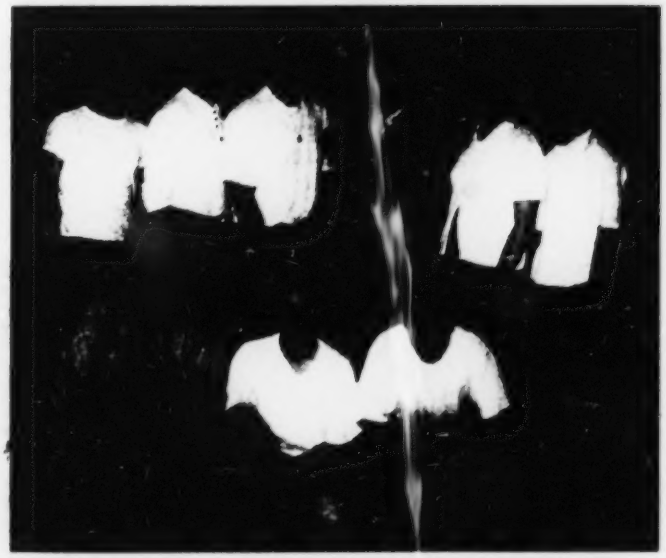
This is not going to change.

Dr. Robert Kubey is Associate Professor in the Department of Communications at Rutgers University.

Montreal high school students produce award-winning video

A team of nine students from Laurier Macdonald High School in Montreal won a national video contest sponsored by CBC Television. The contest, open to students from across Canada, was established to promote a "Don't drink and drive" campaign.

The video was aired on national television during the months of May and June to sensitize students to the dangers of drinking and driving, especially on prom night. The student producers received a cash study grant towards their educations as well as a year's supply of hair care products.



Winning production team with advisor, Mr. Frank Tiseo (front row, left), and Principal, Mr. Joseph Lalla (back row centre).

Under the direction of Mr. Frank Tiseo, Department Head of the Communication Arts Department, winners Enzo Chiovitti, Steve Godinho, Sara Delli Compagni, Frank Conforti, Mauro Di Ciocco, Joseph Di Maulo, Saverio Immarrone, Gary Iozzo and Mario Pesce worked for months to produce the video.

This is not the first time that a video project from Laurier Macdonald has won in competition. In May 1992, two videos produced at the school, "For the Love of Our Planet" and "It's Not Too Late" won first prize at an international competition held at the Italian Center for Environmental Research and Mass Media in Sorrento, Italy.

"Abuse", a public service announcement produced in 1993, won a competition sponsored by the National School Public Relations Association in the United States.

Mr. Joseph Lalla, principal of Laurier Macdonald High School, is justifiably proud of the students and teachers involved in media courses. He comments, "The Communication Arts Department has existed in the school for over twenty-five years. It has been recognized as the best in the province of Quebec and possibly in Canada. Hundreds of students follow courses in photography, computer graphics, computer animation and television production every year. Many have continued these studies at college and university and now hold important careers in the radio, newspaper and television industry."

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TV is not satan's little helper

David Bianculli

"TV is *not* the perfect medium," David Bianculli, recently told an audience at The Centre for Literacy.

As TV critic for The New York Daily News and author of *Teleliteracy* and *Dictionary of Teleliteracy* , Bianculli's work allows him to see enough TV to judge what is bad, what is really bad and what is good. His message about TV and the family was clear, sensible and realistic.

"TV is not wonderful," he stated. "I would say that 90% is awful. But this isn't a condemnation of the medium. The truth is that the odds are the same in film and books." TV is an easy target for criticism because it is so pervasive. "TV is so available that the 90% that's bad seems so much more obvious than the 10% that's good."

It is that phenomenon which allows critics of the medium to dazzle frustrated parents and teachers with empty promises and quick fixes. Bianculli referred to organizers of activities like "TV Turn Off Week" as crusaders whose position is questionable because it simply assumes that TV is totally reprehensible.

"The problem with these people and others like them is that they feel justified in coming to the debate with little or no knowledge of what is on TV. They wouldn't do that in any other debate." This, he suggested, is reason enough to doubt their credibility.

Bianculli lived that very experience earlier on the same day, when he was a guest on CBC's *Radio Noon*. Producers had arranged to have Monty Burke of "TV-Free America" on the line. Unaware of this arrangement, Bianculli was a worthy opponent in what he good-naturedly called an "ambush." He adeptly dismissed Burke's claim that TV is to blame for the increase in obesity amongst children and his subsequent comments which were equally superficial.

The ten percent solution

For his presentation at The Centre, Bianculli had prepared a wide variety of carefully chosen video clips, telling his audience that "TV Turn Off Week" asks you *not* to see valuable shows like these."

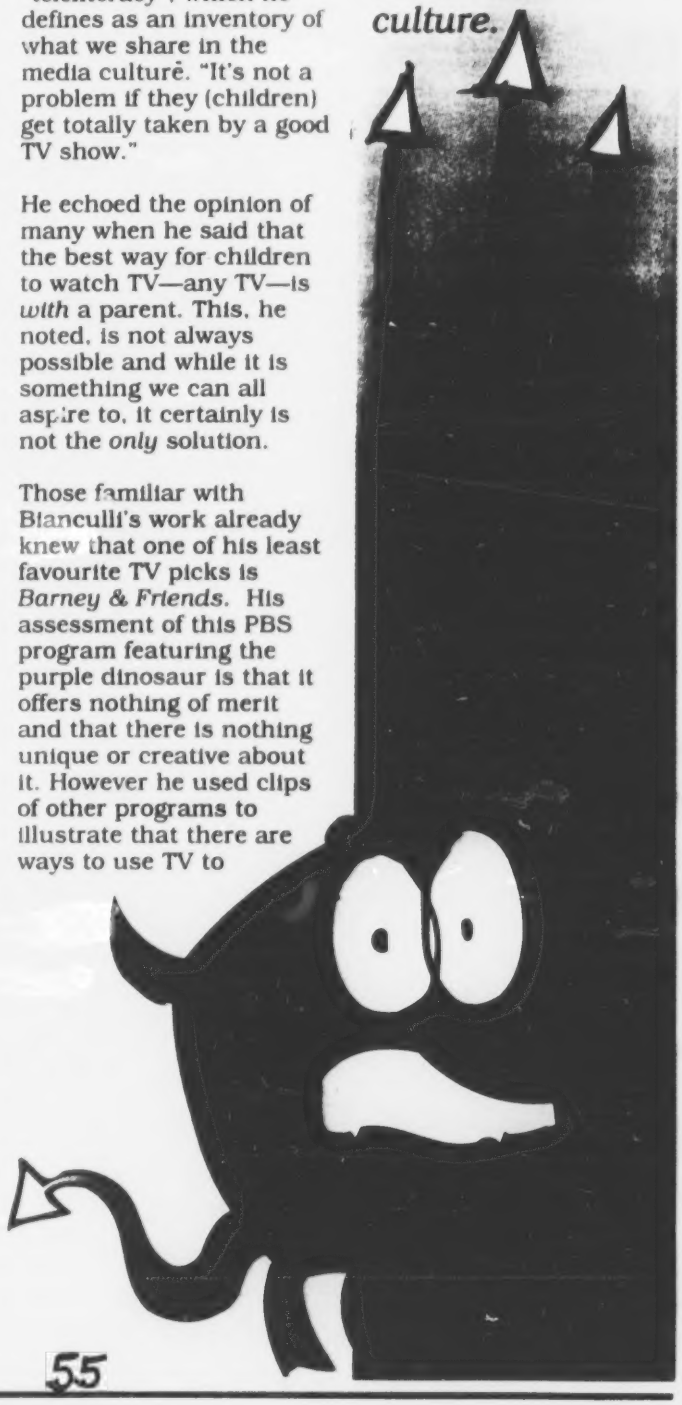
He began with clips from an episode of "The Simpsons" which dealt with the effect of TV violence on the family. References in that episode ranged from the very current, like ABC's "Nightline" to the more obscure, like the film "Psycho." Many young viewers of "The Simpsons" born long after that film was popular, may not have recognized the references to the Hitchcock classic. Yet the message of that episode was not lost on them.

"The Simpsons" is an excellent example of a TV program about which fans and critics have been equally passionate. Bianculli, an enthusiastic fan, commented, "This show assumes more intelligence than almost any show on TV." He credited it with being exemplary of the term "teleliteracy", which he defines as an inventory of what we share in the media culture. "It's not a problem if they (children) get totally taken by a good TV show."

He echoed the opinion of many when he said that the best way for children to watch TV—any TV—is *with* a parent. This, he noted, is not always possible and while it is something we can all aspire to, it certainly is not the *only* solution.

Those familiar with Bianculli's work already knew that one of his least favourite TV picks is *Barney & Friends*. His assessment of this PBS program featuring the purple dinosaur is that it offers nothing of merit and that there is nothing unique or creative about it. However he used clips of other programs to illustrate that there are ways to use TV to

Bianculli defines "teleliteracy" as an inventory of what we share in the media culture.



educate children about issues *outside* TV. The first of these was a program called "Buy Me That" produced by Consumer Reports. Recommended for children aged 3 yrs. and up, it demystifies commercials by deconstructing them in an entertaining and educational manner. Bianculli praised it for doing what network TV never does — that is to look at itself critically.

Another program he likes for its attempt to demystify TV is "Wishbone," a PBS production which dramatizes literary works of art using a dog in the main role. The program offers a unique concept: it illustrates production techniques, showing children how scenes were actually created while also encouraging reading and/or discussion of the particular work it presents.

Tips for parents

Bianculli reminded the audience that using TV as a tool to educate children is not an easy task, and he did not minimize the process. He stressed most energetically that parents should have a central TV in the house rather than TVs in their children's rooms. This offers a greater opportunity to watch what their children watch. "The more you know about TV the more you can make judgments. It's a lot of work—but your kids are worth it."

He observed that in terms of what children watch on TV and how, it is easiest to be a parent until children reach the age of about 6. During those early years, they do not ever have to see what Bianculli calls "real-time TV" if there is a VCR in the home. Having their own video libraries of parent-chosen programs can be as positive for children as having their favourite fairytales read to them.

However, this changes when they begin to attend school. As children get older, the rules keep changing, and this demands careful parental participation. But even as the rules keep changing, so does TV. Bianculli offers assurance in stressing that the important thing for parents to remember is that TV can offer multi-layered messages. You just need to be willing to find them with and for your children.

Bianculli had a tip for parents who want to overcome their children's resistance to parental suggestion. "To get them to watch something you want them to watch, don't tell them to watch it—simply have it on when they are in the room. *Asking* them to watch is often 'the kiss of death,'" according to Bianculli. This tip can work equally well for teachers who want to capture their students' interest in a media studies class. Simply have the TV on as students are entering the class.

Bianculli's TV Picks

The Simpsons

Buy Me That

Wishbone

Due South

Picket Fences

Muppets Tonight

Nova

David Attenborough's "Natural World"

Dennis Potter's "The Singing Detective"

The last mass medium

Bianculli's presentation provoked a great deal of thought and he made most of his points through the use of TV clips. One of the most powerful of these was a 3-minute clip from *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* entitled "American Time Capsule." This brilliant piece of TV is a montage of 200 years of American history. It makes an excellent case for Bianculli's hope that TV be accepted as an art form. "It is now 50 years after the advent—it may be the time that it will be taken seriously."

Not having a TV will not solve the problems of the world. Instead, Bianculli contends, it will mean that people will have missed some of the most important moments of our time. Despite a lot of bad TV, there is enough good TV to make it a valuable experience. On these grounds he defends the medium and its integrity. Moreover, he notes that TV is the last mass medium; the Internet, for all of its popularity, is not a shared medium.

He urges parents to give up the notion that we are going to be able to get children to stop watching TV. This is just not going to happen—nor does he want it to happen. He calls upon parents to use TV to teach responsibility and knowledge. There are no quick fixes. Bianculli emphasized, "A V-chip can't decide what's best for your kids. Only you can." (JB)

David Bianculli spoke at The Centre for Literacy on October 7, 1996.

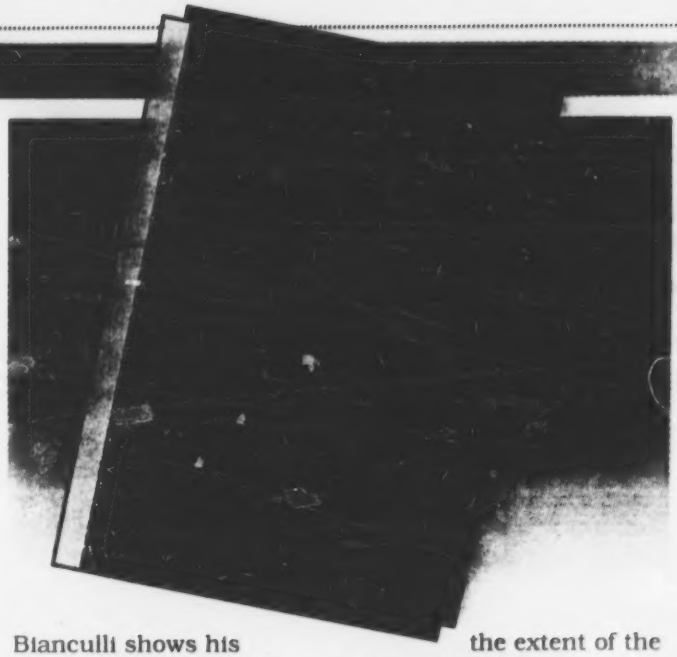
"To get children to watch something you want them to

REVIEWS

Dictionary of Teleliteracy,

David Biancuili,
Continuum, New York
1996
381 pp.

reviewed by Gordon Peffer



As a teacher of Popular Culture courses, especially courses heavy in TV content, I am always on the lookout for a digest of short reviews—quick, but informative introductions to the TV programs I show in class.

The first thing I did in reviewing David Biancuili's *Dictionary of Teleliteracy* was to check up on some of my favourites. The entry for *The Donna Reed Show*, for example, places the show in a 'fifties context as the "female counterpart of *Father Knows Best*" and tells you that the show represents, as David Marc puts it, a prime example of television from the "suburban ecstasy period." The show is an example of the white post-war suburban fantasies of middle America as well as of Donna Reed's own disavowal of the stereotyped character she played for so many seasons. In the same entry, Biancuili makes a point about the show's endurance and continued popularity for a number of years on *Nick at Nite*. There is no disparagement of the viewers.

The Moonwalk is there; so is the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Association Telethon. In describing the latter, Biancuili gives a capsule history of the show as well as details of the aspersions cast on the host's motives and performance. Again Biancuili shows his respect for the viewing audience when he says that, as if to spite adverse criticism of Lewis, viewers have responded with even heftier contributions to the Telethon.

There is an entry on the Gulf War and one on the O.J. Simpson trial, both significant televisual events. The Gulf War broadcasts are notable for the Peter Arnett eyewitness accounts as well as for the fact that a number of U.S. generals were launched on political and/or media careers as a result of their TV exposure. There is no mention in the entry, though, of the video-game quality of a considerable part of the coverage, with Arnett giving the lie to official Pentagon information about the targets of U.S. missiles. A friend of mine gave up watching TV entirely after watching the tightly-controlled TV coverage of the Gulf War.

All the entries mentioned so far, you might notice, are U.S. television programs and events. Except for the BBC/PBS co-productions and some British comedy, that is the extent of the international TV programming. There would be nothing to complain about if the title of the book were *A Dictionary of U.S. Teleliteracy*, but the front jacket blurb calls it, "Television's 500 Biggest Hits, Misses and Events." With few exceptions, if a program did not originate in the U.S., it never rises above the threshold of awareness in this collection.

Okay, TV is American, and American TV is mostly what my students and I watch. But the omission of almost everything originating outside the U.S. does not make for an adequate picture of television literacy. Wouldn't U.S. readers of a book on teleliteracy be interested in something from beyond their borders? As a Canadian, I remember *Hockey Night in Canada* as a great Saturday night experience uniting Canadians in this abstract, far-flung country more than politics perhaps did, and on a par with weather.

Of course, if you are only after the big hits, then you are apt to overlook some better television, as Biancuili does. The Canadian show, *Degrassi High* does get a brief mention and is even lauded as an honest portrayal of teenage life; however, this is only in the context of the longish entry on *Beverly Hills 90210* .

This book tries to be two things — a "Dictionary of Teleliteracy" and a digest of "Television's 500 Biggest Hits, Misses, and Events." It may succeed as the latter, but not as the first.

I am not even too sure what Biancuili means by literacy in this case, but it does not mean the ability to "read" or "deconstruct" TV's messages or codes. Maybe he is using the term to help bring TV in from the cold, as a selling point for people disposed to dislike television — like most English teachers who still see TV as the enemy of traditional book literacy.

Gordon Peffer teaches English at Dawson College.

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REVIEWS

Tabloid Journalism
Gerald S. Greenberg.
Greenwood Publishing Group. Westport, CT
1996
200 pp.

This useful text, subheaded"An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Sources," focuses on the practice of sensationalizing in news reporting. Greenberg brings his experience as a Reference/Bibliographic Instruction Libraries at Ohio State University's Undergraduate Library to this compilation of short annotations.

The Introduction explains that while the book emphasizes English-language journal articles and monographs on tabloid journalism from 1975-1994, it also provides an historical overview of the genre by listing sources which examine sensational journalism of earlier eras.

The book is divided into five chapters, and while it offers a focus on the U.S. it also comments on the genre in media outlets beyond the States. Another positive aspect of the collection is that it does not limit its sources to print. The 819 entries examine the tabloid characteristics of the media rather than of print only.

Greenberg devotes the first very brief chapter to "Primary Sources" while Chapters Two and Three are devoted to "U.S. Print Journalism" and "U.S. Television" respectively.

Chapter Four, entitled "Legal Implications" lists publications which cite legal positions with respect to tabloid journalism. One of several fascinating topics addressed in this chapter is the issue of privacy in U.S. journalism. A number of these entries look at the issue by citing a 1890 landmark article by Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis and several subsequent articles. The issue of privacy becomes broader and more current with entries on actions taken by popular Hollywood stars like Johnny Carson, Cher and Anthony Perkins.

Chapter Five, "International Perspectives," offers exactly what it promises. It provides entries on tabloid journalism in 14 countries including Canada, China, England, Germany, Russia, Japan, Spain, India and the Philippines. The sections dealing with each country are further sub-divided under the headings *Historical Overview* and *Modern Practice*.

Despite the enormous amount of information contained in the book, it is quite a manageable publication with entries clearly cross-referenced for ease of use.

The text is not only useful for anyone who is studying the genre of tabloid journalism, but is also an interesting source of information for anyone with even a passing interest the history of the genre. (JB)

NEWS & NOTES

National and international conferences

International Forum of Researchers
UNESCO
Young People and the Media, Tomorrow
Problems and Viewpoints
April 21 - 25, 1997
Paris, France
This forum continues the work begun at the first World Summit of Children's Television in Australia in March 1995. Chosen subjects at the Paris forum will reflect the shared concerns of participating nations with special attention to under-developed countries and to those becoming democratised. Topics will include multimedia and the development of new technologies and information technologies. Simultaneous translation will be available. Languages at the Forum will be French, English and Spanish.
Information: Research Group on the Relationship Between Children and the Media, Château de Longchamp, Bois de Boulogne, 75016 Paris, France
Tel. (33-1) 44.30.20.01
Fax (33-1) 45.25.73.67

Notes

A reminder that "Prime Time Parent," a kit designed for use by parents, is also a valuable tool for teachers interested in promoting media education in the classroom. Activities in the kit can be adapted for students of all ages.

"Prime Time Parent" is available at The Centre for Literacy and may be borrowed for two weeks. Borrowers are asked to leave a $10. deposit which is refunded when the kit is returned.

SPECIAL IALS SECTION INSIDE

Vol. 12 No. 3 • 1996

Literacy across the curriculum

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

Social literacies

Is learning to speak the same as learning to read and write? Does the move from the oral to the written involve a move across a great cognitive divide as many respected literacy theorists have claimed? Does literacy have predictable social consequences?

A more recent school of ethnographic literacy research which studies how people use reading and writing in real situations calls into question many traditional assumptions, including the idea that there is only a single neutral "Literacy." They argue instead for the concept of many literacies, specifically what they have dubbed social literacies.

Brian Street, the British scholar whose recent collection entitled *Social Literacies* won the NCTE's David Russell Award for Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English, is a well-known spokesperson for this branch of research. Their

basic premise is that people use reading and writing in different ways for different purposes and that social and cultural contexts are the determining factors of those uses.

The implications of this research are profound both for school based literacy teaching and for international adult literacy assessments, campaigns and provision.

For example, one assumption about the difference between oral and written language is that spoken language has more diversity and complexity, that it is more interactive and more dependent on context.

Street and others argue that the differences between oral and written language are not given universals, but features of culture specific conventions. Writing actually involves many features that are equivalent in some ways to the gesture, facial expression, and intonation of spoken language; these include the choice of type of script, ink colour, and publishing signs such as hard cover, which all signify meaning beyond word choice and grammatical structure.

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- **Women & Literacy**
- **Preparing The Future**

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Literacy across the curriculum

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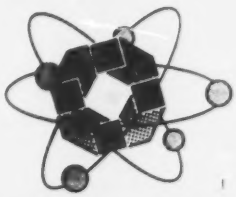
The Centre for Literacy/Le centre d'alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada, and Dawson College.



Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

In schools, he suggests, it would be more productive to develop critical language awareness among students than to teach them about differences between speech and writing.

Assessments and campaigns

Street notes that most current government assessments and campaigns assume "that the social consequences of literacy are given — greater opportunities for jobs, social mobility, fuller lives, etc.— and that what the agencies need to address is the question of how literacy is to be imparted." (28) He calls this an autonomous model of literacy.

Those subscribing to a social view instead question the claims of openness, rationality and critical awareness made by western educators. They look at issues of social control and of the imposition of literacy in colonial situations and within soceties where a dominant literacy is being imposed on lower class speakers.

These issues are distinct from those of an uncomplicated. transmission of a technical skill.

Street offers concrete examples from historical and contemporary situations where people have transformed the imposed literacies by adapting previous practices for their own purposes rather than those expected by the literacy providers [see To Ponder 3].

This issue of *LAC* looks at some implications of literacy practices in Newfoundland and in literacy programs for women around the world.

IALS debate

In this issue, we are also pleased to have an extended review of the IALS by Brian Street. This is a continuing series of critical perspectives on the international literacy survey. In the next issue, Stan Jones, of Carleton University, one of the architects of the IALS, will respond to the critiques offered by Brian Street and by Harvey Graff (*LAC* Vol. 12 No. 2).

Because of the degree of interest in this question, we have run Dr. Street's entire article in place of *Media Focus* which will return in Winter 1997. [LS]

Recommended reading:
Brian V. Street, *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography and Education*. (Longman: London)1995.

1 On knowledge and power

Surely there is no automatic, positive link between knowledge and power, especially if that means power in a social or political sense. At times, knowledge brings merely an enlightened impotence or paralysis. One may know exactly what to do but lack the wherewithal to act.

Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) p. 109.

2 On propriety

The theme of propriety came from participants' use of the term "proper" to talk about learning to write properly, to spell properly, or to use grammar in the proper way. Hearing the term again and again led us to the dictionary where we found the following:

Propriety (n) 1. conformity to established standards of good or proper behaviour or manners **2.** appropriateness to the purpose or circumstances; suitability.

Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd ed.

These definitions provide two perspectives on propriety and reflect potential outcomes of writing instruction. The first definition suggests that there is a correct way to write. Instruction which emerges from this definition often focuses on accurate spelling and correct punctuation and sentence structure. This seems to be the understanding that some project participants have about writing properly. Whether expressed by a new writer struggling with spelling or a fluent scribe preoccupied with grammar rules, a focus on "doing it right" can stifle writing.

This propriety theme was echoed in people's statements that they had nothing to say. Somewhere participants had learned that their experiences were not proper content for writing. They were surprised to discover that others would want to read about their experiences and their communities, about their culture. This understanding of propriety may create a stark silence about a whole way of life.

Writing instruction which reflects the second definition of propriety aims to equip writers to communicate effectively in a wider range of situations or contexts. Rather than focusing on rules and correct ways to write, writing instruction can challenge narrow definitions of propriety, analyze their roots, and explore how various forms and conventions of writing are appropriate to certain situations.

Helen Woodrow and Mary Norton, *Propriety and Possibilities*, (St. Johns NF: Harrish Press) 1996, pp. 2-3.

SEE REVIEWS, p 16 for a full discussion of this book.

3 On recognizing local literacies

Local perceptions and uses of literacy, then, may differ from those of the dominant culture, and must be taken into account in order to understand the literacy experience of different peoples. All of this represents a different picture from that presented by those urban educators who see only 'ignorance' or 'backwardness' in the village. The over-emphasis, in Iran, on this urban perspective on literacy, meant that educators failed to identify those features of local literacy and culture most likely to facilitate adaptation to the new economic order of the country in the 1970s. Rather than seeking to impose a particular literacy and ideology on rural life ... observers might have looked at how the villagers themselves perceived the different literacies to which they were exposed and how they made pragmatic adaptations to serve their particular interests... These examples also suggest that, in most cases in the contemporary world, literacy is not being introduced entirely fresh to 'illiterate' populations. Rather, most people have some experience of forms of literacy, whether as in these cases, through traditional religious texts, or as in many other circumstances, through exposure, however, minimal, to the commercial literacy of local elites or neighbouring cultures. In all of the cases the reality is of a mix of oral and literate conventions, and the introduction of specific forms of literacy through education and agency campaigns represents a shift in those conventions rather than the introduction of an entirely new process.

Brian Street, *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography and Education*, (London and New York: Longman) 1995, pp. 42 - 43.

The Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative

by Bob Bickerton,
Massachusetts State Director
of Adult Education

[On November 7, 1996, Bob Bickerton facilitated a presentation at The Centre for Literacy on the model of workplace basic skills education that has been in place in Massachusetts for more than a decade. Because they have a longer record of involvement and evaluation than other American states or Canadian provinces, we asked Bob to share their experience. Below is part of the text he presented. Additional checklists are available. LS.]

A Statewide Policy Foundation

The Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative (MWEI) is in its eleventh year of operation. WMEI was originally launched in 1985 as a collaboration between the Departments of Education, Employment & Training, the Executive Office of Labor, the Commonwealth Literacy Campaign, and was later joined by the Department of Medical Security and our state's Industrial Services ("dislocated workers") Program. The MWEI has utilized a combination of direct state workplace education appropriation, state hospital assessments, state ABE and federal Adult Education Act funding, and JTPA 8% (job training) funding to act as a catalyst for the development and institutionalization of local employer, worker/union, and adult learning provider workplace partnerships.

From the start, the state partners contracted with an external evaluator to assist us not only in ascertaining program performance, but to contribute to building a knowledge base from which these initial pilot programs could be transformed into a true workplace education system.

Five rounds of federal grant support obtained through the national Workplace Literacy Partnerships Program have greatly expanded the initiative's programmatic foundation. With increasing private sector contributions to match public funds, the initiative's capacity has almost tripled. On an annual basis, more than 25 partnerships (including one or more businesses, an experienced education provider, and worker/unions) are supported during their initial developmental stage.

Since MWEI's inception, the number of local initiatives substantially achieving the level of workplace integration required for long term/permanent private sector investment has exceeded the one-hundred mark. Although we have encountered both the usual and some extraordinary challenges (e.g., unemployment shifting from a national low of 3% to an astounding national high of almost 10% in less than one year — now below 5% once again), the cumulative experience and our growing knowledge base have developed into a solid yet dynamic policy foundation for this statewide initiative.

Workplace education has rapidly grown far beyond the

The Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative
The Case for Workplace Education

From the employer's point of view: • Rapidly changing technologies & procedures • Increasing competition • Transition to high performance workplace • Return on investment from current workforce (particularly in periods of low unemployment).	**From the worker's/unions point of view:** • Job retention • Access to jobs with a career path and high wages • Job satisfaction • Effectiveness of contextualized learning
From the community's point of view: • Retain and attract good jobs at good wages • Retain and attract revenue producers • Additional family and community benefits from more educated residents	**From the state's/province's point of view:** • Leverage additional investment in adult (basic) education • Increase access to services for "hard to reach" adults • Building capacity systematically

"new frontier" stage. Numerous studies, reports and panel discussions have laid out the basic tenets for successful workplace education. Rather than belabor these familiar aspects, I will attempt to summarize additional characteristics of the Massachusetts program that we believe have been essential to its success in the following sections.

A Statewide, Strategic Evaluation Plan

One of the premier benefits of building a statewide system for workplace education is the opportunity to systematically build the knowledge base needed to support increasingly effective services. In order to accomplish this objective, a well supported and strategic evaluation plan must be established and implemented throughout the life of the initiative. The Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative has supported external and internal, formative and summative evaluation since the first programs were launched with public funds in 1985. Since then, our understanding of what works (and what doesn't) has grown continuously, contributing to a knowledge base that is increasingly specific to each participating industry.

The external evaluation is designed to answer two major questions:

- What are the anticipated and unanticipated goal-based outcomes or benefits of the project to participants, workplaces, local partnerships, the Consortium?
- What is the relationship between these specific outcomes and various aspects of project design and quality?

The external evaluation is comprised of four main steps:

1. Training in evaluation goals, strategies and methodologies.
2. The Planning & Evaluation Team's role in identifying outcomes.
3. Analyzing outcomes at the partnership and statewide levels (through the external evaluator).
4. Sharing findings, developing recommendations for improvement and adjusting program design.

A summary of typical outcomes identified by local partnerships (Planning & Evaluation Teams) have been listed on charts used by the MWEI to summarize findings, analyze and track results [see SAMPLE CHECKLIST].

The Process of "Institutionalizing" Workplace Education

To institutionalize workplace education services, several conditions must be met.

1. The partners need to be committed to and have the financial capacity to develop, implement, integrate and institutionalize quality workplace literacy services.
2. A forecast of future literacy needs is needed.
3. Linkages between the program and the long-term goals of the organization need to be identified.
4. An organizational analysis of potential resources is required and resources need to be allocated.

The Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative – Policies that work

1. Seed funding — a catalyst for workplace education.
2. Clearly articulated expectations and commitments — UP FRONT — particularly a preliminary commitment of "institutionalization" (in stages) from the CEO.
3. A strong partnership between business, education and labor.
4. Paid release time for participating workers.
5. An empowered "Planning & Evaluation Team."
6. A comprehensive and accurate literacy audit and task analysis.
7. Curricula and materials grounded in worksite relevant contexts.
8. Continued engagement of the CEO at the local and state partnership levels.
9. A well supported, strategic/system wide evaluation plan.
10. Strong commitment to and investment in "continuous improvement" through staff training and development.

5. The ability of partners in programming needs to be strengthened so that a coherent program of high quality can be developed.
6. Policies need to be implemented that promote participation and establish a broad base of support.
7. Relationships need to be established within and outside the company to ensure that learning can be continuous.
8. Educational services must be grounded in priority worksite contexts.
9. All partners must understand the program's objectives and how they fit within the broader goals of the business.
10. The results/outcomes of the program must be well documented and compelling to the business and labor partners.

Scenarios for institutionalization:

A. The employer assumes all costs of operating the program on site.
B. A consortium of employers (generally small businesses) shares the cost operating the program at a common, readily accessible and/or regional site.
C. A union assumes and/or shares with the employer the costs of operating the program on site and/or at a union hall. This may include negotiating a worker education fund as part of a new contract.
D. Entering into agreement(s) with local adult basic education/literacy programs to purchase services and/or "seats" in the program.

SAMPLE CHECKLIST: Ways to collect information:

1. test and/or partnership developed pre-, during and post-assessments
2. review of program records
3. review of company and/or union records
4. self-assessment by participants based on skills list
5. self-assessment by participants based on student and class goals
6. teacher assessment of students
7. teacher and participant analysis of Individual Education Plans
8. review of minutes of Planning and Evaluation Teams (P.E.T.s)
9. report of focus groups
10. review of Consortium's Plan of Operations at Consortium Advisory Council and P.E.T. meetings.
11. review of internal evaluation and semi-annual performance reports
12. other as identified by teams during start-up as needed
13. supervisor and/or steward survey
14. performances and completion ceremonies
15. demonstration of competencies
16. review of portfolios
17. collection of anecdotes
18. video documentation
19. other (please specify)
20 other (please specify)

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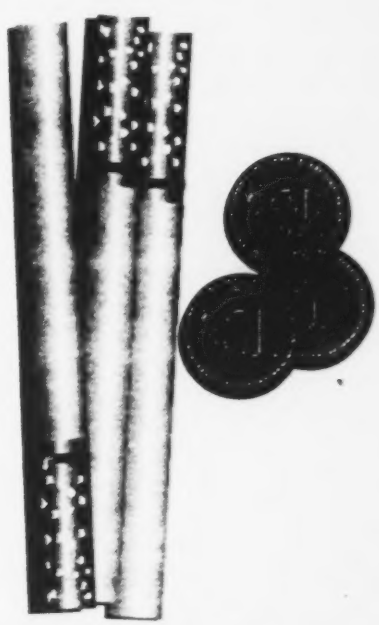
Scar-y stories and poems

One of my favourite moments in the film "Il Postino" was the scene on Pablo Neruda's veranda when Mario, the humble postman, after having incurred the wrath of his beloved's aunt for reciting some of Neruda's love poems to her niece, shares his bewilderment with Neruda. The poet chides Mario, asking who gave him permission to use someone else's poems, and Mario retorts indignantly, "Poetry doesn't belong to the one who wrote it, but to the one who needs it."

I thought of that scene several times as I read *Propriety and Possibilities*, [See REVIEWS]. In it, Helen Woodrow and Mary Norton describe many of the writing activities and strategies they used in their community writing project. This one is reprinted with permission. [LS]



We all have scars that we have acquired over the years and stories about those scars. Think about one of your scars and write a brief story of how you got it. When you use this activity with students, provide them with a model story. For example, this is the "scar-y" story resource person Francis Kazemek prepared for instructors in the teleconference course:

> On my right forearm is a round scar about the size of a dime. It has faded over the years and is hard to see now. I got the scar as teenager in Chicago during the later 1950s.
>
> My buddies and I were "tough guys" — or at least we thought we were — and we constantly tested one another as we hung out on the street corners of our neighbourhood. One way of proving our toughness was to challenge someone else to a game of "chicken" with a cigarette.
>
> The game went like this. Two of us would put our forearms together, and then a third person would light a fresh cigarette and place it between our arms. The first person to jerk away his arm was the "chicken."
>
> Oftentimes a whole cigarette would burn out without either person pulling away. As I said, we were tough guys.
>
> Francis Kazemek

Then you can ask writers to take the "scar-y" story they wrote and retell it in the form of poetry. They can use any style. Make sure they know their poem doesn't have to rhyme.

This is how Francis transformed his story into a poem:

> Tough guys in levis and leather jackets
>
> Loafing under the corner street lights
>
> Pitching pennies and posing like Elvis
>
> Talking of girls and California
> Wondering how it was to be men:
>
> Thinking that seared flesh and gritted teeth
>
> Might somehow magically show us the way.
>
> *Francis Kazemek*

Literacy, Economy and Society:

IALS
EIAA

Results of the first International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), Statistics Canada/OECD, 1995.

Review by Brian V. Street, King's College, University of London

Contextualizing literacy

In 1981 Scribner and Cole in *The Psychology of Literacy* published a definitive account of what can legitimately be claimed about the relationship between literacy and cognitive processes. After a decade's work among the Vai peoples of Liberia, with a team of psychologists and anthropologists, employing a battery of tests and observational methods about the uses of literacy in different languages and contexts, they came to the conclusion that 'specific practices promote specific skills.' There is nothing special about literacy in general as regards its consequences for cognitive skills — in each case particular skills and abilities are associated with a particular literacy.

In the Vai case there were three languages, Vai, Arabic and English, and literacy was variously used for letter writing, for religious purposes and for trading and schooling. Particular skills are associated with each set of literacy practices. The significance of this study and its uses in academic and applied areas since 1980, has been that it challenged the dominant belief until then that literacy in itself led to cognitive enhancement and that literacy could be described as a generic skill. It is now orthodoxy that literacy practices vary from one context to another.

The IALS survey of 1995 in one sense develops this tradition by extending the range of literacy practices from variations within a single cultural group, as in the Vai case, to variation across nation states, in this case across seven countries. Armed with a battery of tests and questions, a series of research teams entered the homes of

adults in 7 countries in Europe and N. America to attempt to establish levels and skills of literacy and their variation. Its findings at first glance also appear to reinforce Scribner & Cole's seminal insights: the variation to be found across nations is a product of the variation in uses of literacy in those contexts — 'specific practices promote specific skills.' Where variation was identified among these populations, it could be put down to different social uses and practices of literacy.

That Polish respondents did not do as well on the scales for 'document literacy and prose literacy' as respondents from the other countries may be explained with reference to 'the changing economic situation there, as these scales represent a type of literacy likely to be more common in a fully market-oriented society' (p. 57). Similarly the higher level tasks create difficulty for many respondents since 'the more difficult tasks may also require them to draw on less familiar or more specialised types of knowledge beyond that given in the text' (p. 52): those practised at these skills will do better at them on the tests. Again, those who perform mainly at the lowest levels in the scales do so because they have less 'practice' at the literacy skills involved in these higher levels. The people at lower levels, however, report on themselves as having sufficient literacy skills for their purposes — they do not rate themselves as 'poor' and indeed many rate themselves as 'excellent' (p. 109). This suggests that they apprehend Scribner and Cole's insight that it would be inappropriate to apply the literacy standards of one domain or culture to those required in another: literacy is specific to context.

There is an inevitable contradiction between, on the one hand, recognizing the cultural and contextual nature of different 'multifaceted' literacy practices, and on the other, representing particular kinds of literacy - those of the researchers' own culture - as preferable.

The researchers themselves certainly pay lip service to this position and have done a service in moving beyond the dominant view in agency and government surveys that there is a single standard to be applied to all, and that there are just two dimensions in measurement — literacy and illiteracy. They rightly reject the latter term as unhelpful in contemporary society, with its unfortunate connotations of ignorance and deficit. In practice, levels and demands on literacy are varied and are changing all the time, so the researchers instead are attempting to design scales that will capture this complexity and variation. Instead of a simple literacy/illiteracy dichotomy, they measure literacy in three 'domains' - prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy - across which individuals will vary according to experience and context.

However, there are indications throughout the report that the authors, and certainly those who make use of the findings, will in practice resist this call to complexity and continue to privilege certain kinds of literacy and certain types of knowledge as superior to others. Indeed, that in a sense is the motivation for producing the report in the first place: to tell governments and agencies where their populations are failing so that they can put it right. The language of deficit runs through the report of findings and the commentaries on it.

There is an inevitable contradiction between, on the one hand, recognizing the cultural and contextual nature of different 'multifaceted' literacy practices, and on the other, representing particular kinds of literacy - those of the researchers' own culture - as preferable. This dilemma is a constant theme in the qualitative research literature but it is not addressed directly in this report and its absence leaves governments, agencies and educators free to represent the report's findings in traditional deficit terms — as proof of 'low standards', the need to return to 'basics', and the need for 'remediation' among those who, for

instance, fail to subscribe to the literacy of 'a fully market-oriented society' and are therefore backward and inferior.

The ways in which the report lends credence to such ethnocentrism, despite the overt efforts of the researchers to avoid it and to address complexity, can be found at a number of levels. These include the terminology used to refer to variation; the unselfconscious use of tasks that are culturally specific as though they could indicate general literacy levels and skills; and the lack of attention to the theoretical and methodological debates raised in the vast qualitative research literature on literacy across cultures. Although the authors argue that 'the aim is not to establish a single international literacy standard,' they lay their work open to being used in that way partly through their own unconscious use of specific concepts and standards with reference to literacy. From the outset the context for literacy is set as being the economic and political standards of 'developed' and 'market-oriented' societies:

"Today, adults need a higher level of literacy to function well: society has become more complex and low-skill jobs are disappearing. Therefore, inadequate levels of literacy among a broad section of the population potentially threaten the strength of economies and the social cohesion of nations."

There is, of course, a considerable literature on the nature of the 'new work order' and its relation to literacy practices, and that literature throws into question many of the assumptions in the report, such as the disappearance of low level jobs and the kinds of literacy required for new post-Fordist employment.

But even before we address these issues, it is significant that the report has reduced the discussion of literacy to these work-oriented issues and to a traditional 'functional' approach to

BOX 1

"Literacy practices at work": IALS & other research

The report does refer to 'literacy practices at work...and in the community' and claims that 'both the range of practices and the relation of practice to literacy were examined'. This information was elicited through a series of questions to respondents 'about the frequency with which they engaged in a variety of reading, writing and numeracy tasks.'

Interestingly, in the light of contemporary methodologies in qualitative research on such literacy practices, the researchers appear to have already drawn up a list of categories and simply asked the respondents 'how frequently they read or used information from six types of text', including letters or memos, reports, manuals etc. We are not told anything about the actual conditions in which these questions were asked, about the relations of questioner and respondent or about the actual discourse in which the interaction was conducted. The categories themselves are already closed down rather than elicited from the informants.

We are unlikely, therefore, to learn about other kinds of indigenous literacy practices, or about their meaning to participants such as those outlined in a number of recent studies from around the world. In one South African example, a researcher observed and discussed the uses by a rural worker without formal literacy, of diagrams, head maps and oral interactions as he built farm wagons. The implications of this indigenous practice for educational programmes are considerable - the need for education provision to build on local knowledge rather than marginalize it; the need for formal systems to articulate with informal ones; the need for pre-programme research that identifies indigenous literacy and knowledge. The IALS report does indeed begin to recognize this issue by including questions about everyday literacy practices, but in comparison with these rich ethnographic accounts, its methodology considerably limits its value.

literacy. The authors' definition of literacy itself reproduces the standard functional view of early UNESCO documents: 'Using printed and written information to function in society: to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential' (p.14).

This view of literacy has been elaborated, refined and frequently rejected by more sophisticated recent research. But none of this is mentioned in the report, which proceeds as though the definitions and the terms are unproblematic and universally agreed. Similarly the language of deficit already hinted at in the opening reference to 'inadequate levels of literacy' recurs throughout as a leitmotif with constant suggestions of a literacy 'problem,' of 'low' levels, of 'success' or 'failure' in achieving on the tests and of 'remediation' in putting it right.

Literacy practices

The terminology for describing the complexity of literacy practices likewise suggests a reductionist view in which what 'really' counts is skills and levels rather than the broader and more complex uses and meanings of literacy indicated by such terms as 'practices.' While the term 'literacy practices' is frequently employed, there is equally often a slide towards more narrow functionally defined evaluative terms; skills, activities, levels, tasks, and abilities are used as though they all meant the same as, and were a gloss on, 'literacy practices.'

Under the heading of 'literacy practices at work,' for instance, a gloss is provided that immediately reduces practices to the test situation: 'most adults must face some literacy tasks at work'; and again under 'literacy practices in the community' we are told 'everyone, whether employed or not, can engage in literacy activities... respondents were asked to report on their everyday reading and writing and to judge how well their abilities served them' (p. 87).

While the term 'literacy practices' is frequently employed, there is equally often a slide towards more narrow functionally defined evaluative terms; skills, activities, levels, tasks, and abilities are used as though they all meant the same as, and were a gloss on, 'literacy practices.'

The shift in one sentence from the broader 'practices, to 'activities' (a more behaviourist concept), to 'tasks' (the term employed for testing items) and then 'abilities' (a cognitive term supposedly inferred from performance on 'tasks'), is symptomatic of the lack of attention to the conceptual apparatus.

To those working in the qualitative field, in which there is now a large and elaborate research literature, the phrase 'literacy practices' has a specific meaning that precisely separates it from the various terms noted above. In that literature, 'literacy practices' in the plural indicates recognition that there are multiple uses and meanings of literacy in social practice — that literacy is a social practice that cannot be reduced simply to skills, abilities or measurable items on a task list; that literacy practices vary from one context to another; that people themselves hold varying meanings, often contested, that may not coincide with those of academic researchers; and that the uses of meanings of literacy are always imbued with power relations. Both the practice and the social relations around literacy are ways in which power is exercised and realized.

While recognizing that the IALS report belongs to a different genre and has its own rigour within that research tradition, it is disappointing that the authors make no reference at all to this significant area of work, especially as they themselves make constant reference to some of the tenets, such as the 'complexity' of literacy, to its cultural character and to the need to get beyond crude and reductionist definitions. Even the chapter of the report entitled 'The practice(s) of literacy' has only one reference at the end, to Irwin Kirsch's *Adult Literacy in America*

(1993). One is lead to the conclusion that, whatever they state about literacy practices and their complexity, in fact the authors still see literacy as simply a measurable skill in which those who practice it in a 'fully market-oriented society' are superior. The complex everyday literacies in which people engage — religious literacies, community literacies, literacies among urban youth, literacy practices involving secrecy, ethnic identity, the construction of gender — are all marginalized by this emphasis on one particular form of literacy and the kinds of knowledge associated with it.

Cultural bias & test items

What is currently available through the 1995 publication provides admittedly a limited account of its research methodology and there are no doubt fuller versions of what the researchers actually did and why; but the examples given nevertheless indicate the kinds of problems that qualitative researchers are likely to raise with this approach.

Researchers for the IALS project entered the homes of large numbers of adults in the seven countries and administered a series of tests and questionnaires. We are not given much evidence for the situations themselves, the nature of the encounters, the previous indications through texts or oral accounts that had been given to the subjects or the social interactions involved. Apart from the 'background questionnaire' and the 'series of questions about literacy practices' noted above, the researchers also presented respondents with a series of test booklets, taking up to 45 minutes to complete.

The test items used were taken from documents available in all of the countries and usually consisted of a piece of text or a diagram or table, about which the respondent was asked questions. Unfortunately we are not often given the actual wording of the questions, which are mostly presented in reported speech, nor the exact context in which they were asked - crucial methodological issues in any sociolinguistic research on interviewing in general and testing in particular. What exactly did the respondents believe they were meant to be doing and how committed were they to completing such lengthy and unfamiliar tasks?

BOX 2

A sample test item

For example, one of the IALS test items is a passage on the 'Impatiens' plant:

"Appearance: It is a herbaceous bushy plant with a height of 30 to 40 cm. The thick fleshy stems are branched and very juicy, which means because of the tropical origin, that the plant is sensitive to cold. The light green or white speckled leaves are pointed, elliptical and slightly indented on the edges. The smooth leaf surfaces and the stems indicate a great need of water" (p.32).

The authors indicate what the item was intended to elicit:

"One task asks the reader to identify 'what the smooth leaf and stem suggest about the plant'. The second paragraph of the article is labelled 'Appearance' and contains a sentence that states stems are branched and very juicy, which means because of the tropical origin, that the plant is sensitive to cold. This sentence distracted some readers from the last sentence in the paragraph:. The smooth leaf surfaces and the stems indicate a great need of water. This task received a difficulty value of 254, placing it in the middle of Level 2" (p.32).

The authors unusually give us the actual words used for asking the question about this complex passage, including the ambiguous request to identify 'what the smooth leaf and stem suggest about the plant'. The 'correct' answer is that these features of the leaf suggest/indicate a great need of water. How respondents took the term 'suggest' is not indicated nor how it was translated in the different languages used for the tests.

The researchers do recognize the possibility of cultural bias in both the content of the tests and the setting but claim to have overcome this: 'one way of trying to guard against cultural bias in the results was by constructing a large number of tasks — considerably more than would have been needed to obtain statistically valid estimates of each person's literacy level' (p.18). A quantitative answer is given to what is essentially a qualitative problem: 'culture' by definition is an issue of interpretation and frequently of contestation, not simply a matter of statistical validity. The test items themselves raise similar problems that those working in the field of language, discourse and culture have certainly not resolved but on which they have developed complex theoretical and methodological debates and suggestions for further research. Again none of this is referred to, and again that might not matter if the authors were not claiming to be offering findings that have cultural and linguistic implications.

An analysis of the discourse of the test items, for instance, suggests that they generally belong to a particular form of language that is school and indeed test oriented. These are not the literacy practices of either work or community as these vary across Europe and North America; they are those of the academic researchers who thereby privilege particular discourses and modes of knowing, particular 'academic literacies.'

Many of the 'factual' passages are written in a discourse style typical of what Kress has described as pre-war school based 'scientific writing,' in contrast with recent genres that employ more oral-like features [see BOX 2].

The text assumes a very particular kind of audience and no doubt many readers will never have encountered such a style, or if so, perhaps only at school which for some would be many years ago.

The text assumes a very particular kind of audience and no doubt many readers will never have encountered such a style, or if so, perhaps only at school which for some would be many years ago.

This is also evident in the classic testing discourse that assumes the testee knows what is indicated by terms like 'suggest' i.e. that they are expected to recognize a question about cause and effect, whereas the word may 'suggest' quite different things to them. They are also expected to make the link between the word 'suggest' in the question and the word 'indicate' in the text and to differentiate the latter from 'because' in the previous (distracter) sentence.
It is clear that a very particular discourse style is involved here, both in the target text and in the question asked about it. Recent works on the language of the science classroom have taught us just how complex such interactions are and how little weight can be put on decontextualised responses of this kind.

That the responses are used to measure levels of literacy in contemporary society and to provide comparisons between countries seems eminently problematic. That there may be other 'legitimate' answers to the questions set is a commonplace of sociolinguistic study of tests. [A further test item example was provided].

How committed adults approached in their own homes by the researchers are likely to be to this testing discourse remains to be investigated. How are adults in their own homes engaged in these alien tasks expected to access that particular genre, even if they did learn it at school? It is these differences in discourse style and expectations about tasks, as well as the deeper assumptions about what is knowledge and how it is constructed and represented, that underlie what qualitative researchers refer to as 'cultural bias' - not simply the statistical validity of the number of tasks set.

Issues of power

These alternative readings are partly matters of differences between the researchers and the respondents, but they are also indicative of differences

between research communities and their respective methodologies. Whatever their backgrounds, one might legitimately expect the IALS team with their high profile and the large consequences of their research, to take some note of the work of fellow researchers that impinges on their design and procedure.

But there is a broader issue at stake here than simply academic differences. The issue here is of power: the interpretations placed on texts by the researchers are constantly referred to as 'correct' and where respondents offer different interpretations these are used to mark them down in the scales.

If we instead pose the question of whose interpretations are 'appropriate', applying a key concept from the Ethnography of Communication tradition, the frame shifts from a monolithic quasi-scientific assumption of truth to a more socially relative recognition that particular discourses and utterances are appropriate to particular social conditions: Scribner and Cole's "specific practices promote specific skills."

If the IALS researchers wish to argue that the conditions set by their survey, and in

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particular by the test items and the questions respondents were asked about them, lead to certain kinds of response as more 'appropriate,' then they need to characterize that domain more carefully. They need to problematize its assumptions rather than to take them for granted and to indicate something of how other responses would be appropriate in other conditions.

There is a power relation, then, between the researchers and their respondents, on the one hand, and between this particular style of research and other research traditions, on the other. The research team indeed have immense power as the very debate now going on about their findings indicates.

That they do not draw attention to this power but instead write as though their findings are the neutral product of objective scientific inquiry is itself a classic procedure of institutional power. If nothing else, the report will provide excellent data for students interested in the workings of discursive power in late twentieth century Europe and N. America.

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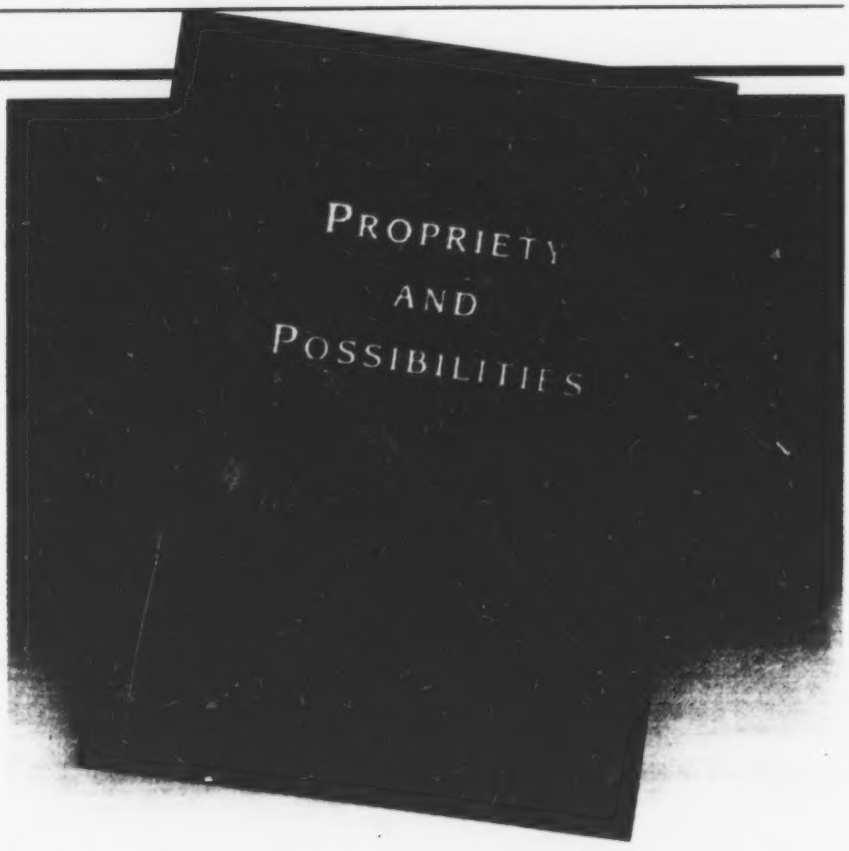
Propriety and Possibilities:

Writing in adult basic education programs



by Helen Woodrow and Mary Norton. Harrish Press. St. John's. Newfoundland. 1996. 64pp. (ISBN 0-9681338-1-9).

Almost a year ago when I reviewed ***A Newfoundland Spell***, (*LAC* Winter 1996), I described it as a "collection of stories, essays and poems reflect[ing] the lives of people trying to transform themselves through learning, grappling with economic uncertainty, family pressures, personal anxiety, conflict of values, but hanging on and looking ahead."

Now editor Helen Woodrow and colleague Mary Norton have published a companion volume describing the writing project that gave rise to ***A Newfoundland Spell***, and offering a philosophy and collection of classroom practices that can help other adult education teachers and tutors tap the potential of communities writing their stories.

Newfoundland is rich in oral traditions — song, story telling, preaching — but for hundreds of years written literacy had limited value in a fishing culture where men went to sea in childhood and women kept the home together until the men returned. That tradition was shaken in 1992 when the government called a moratorium on cod fishing because the stocks were too depleted to sustain the industry. Under federal government recovery programs, thousands of unemployed fishery workers were given support to return to school to upgrade their skills for the new jobs that would replace fishing — a classic case of what Brian Street would call an effort to impose the dominant literacy [see To Ponder 3, p.3]. The story of The Atlantic

On dialect and educators' prejudice

Nick Donovan, an ABE instructor from a coastal community, recalled how his dialect was ridiculed when he attended university:

...having come from a small outport to a city...was rather intimidating [as] we were really made to feel ashamed of our dialect. And I can think of sitting in the university in the lecture theatre in the back afraid to speak for fear of ridicule from the classmates. Even the English professors were not beyond this kind of censure..I'm surprised... that I had the fortitude to stay with it the way I was made to feel sometimes.

Propriety and Possibilities, p.4

Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) program has not yet been written.

However, predictably, local groups turned some of the opportunities to advantage. In 1995, two hundred twenty-five ABE instructors and students were lucky enough to find themselves in Helen Woodrow's Writing Project in a string of coastal communities. In *Propriety and Possibilities*, a publication of only two chapters, Woodrow and Norton describe how the project evolved and what was learned; they then extrapolate activities and strategies that other teachers can use in classrooms or community-based programs in the name of improving literacy. The experience of teachers and students writing together is central to the process of discovery and growth that occured.

Dialect, grammar, cultural prejudice

The philosophy of writing presented by Woodrow and Norton is not new or original: it grows from years of theory and practice in process writing and writing-to- learn. Their contribution is to recast the theory in terms of their local experience in community-based settings and to generalize it in a way that speaks to teachers and learners beyond their island.

They name some of the social and cultural issues that underlie writing instruction and discuss them under the themes of propriety and possibilities.

Propriety is the term derived from participants' concern for proper spelling, grammar, pronunciation [see To Ponder 2, p. 3], a concern that frequently stifled them and condemned them to silence. But another meaning of propriety as "appropriate to particular circumstances or purposes" led to discussions of forms and conventions of writing appropriate to particular situations. The authors offer one-page historical overviews of dialect, grammar and cultural prejudice which they used with learners to explore personal feelings of shame and inadequacy about language and speech. [see BOX]. While these summaries are not intended for academic purposes, they are perfect for awakening the kind of language awareness that can give learners confidence in their own voices.

This text should be of interest to those American teachers, parents and commentators who have been reacting to the recent decision by an Oakland California school board to recognize black English as a language (Ebonics) and to request special bilingual education funds for teaching their students standard English. This case embodies the political, social and cultural nature of literacy.

Possibilities is the notion that through writing and sharing writing, "people can reclaim their language and their culture and begin to counter cultural prejudice."

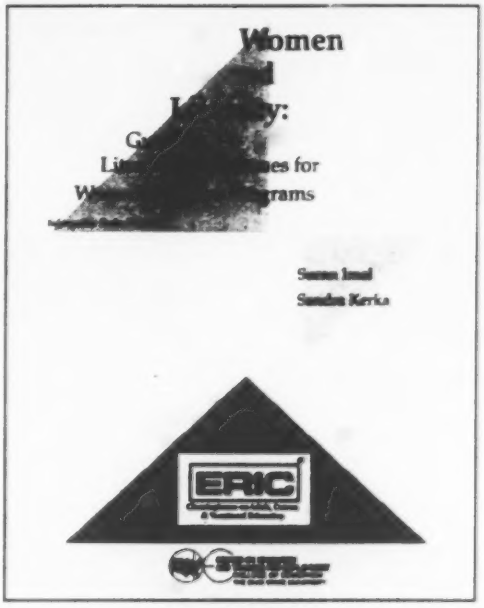
By opening dialogue and exchange and validating local dialect and voice, the workshop leaders provided the opportunity for communities to take their stories to the world. Several Newfoundland writers participated in the project; the leaders kept their own notebooks and share excerpts in this collection; and participants unearthed local diaries that reflected daily lives in their community decades earlier.

Activities

The second chapter of *Propriety and Possibilities*, gives explicit ideas for classroom and community writing. Again, these are gathered from a variety of well-known sources — Kazemek, Macrorie, Adams — but they are particularized through their application in this project, giving teachers insight into how generic ideas can be adapted to local needs. The authors are careful to include discussion of spelling, punctuation and paragraph awareness, as they arise from student writing, thus allowing propriety its due but keeping it in its proper place. [LS]

Inquiries about the publication:
Harrish Press,
18 Leslie Street,
St. John's, Newfoundland,
Canada, A1E 2V6,
Tel: (709) 753-8815;
Fax: (709) 753-8856

Women and Literacy:
Guide to the Literature and Issues for Woman-Positive Programs



By Susan Imel and Sandra Kerka, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, College of Education, The Ohio State University, 1996, 98 pp. (Information Series No. 367).

There is a growing literature which suggests that women's needs are often ignored or unmet in traditional literacy programs. This publication, according to its authors, is intended to provide a guide to the information that currently exists on the topic and to assist the development of "woman-positive programs," a phrase originally coined by CCLOW researchers and chosen by Imel and Kerka to describe an overall goal. Although written to influence American practice, it acknowledges that much of the information has been generated in Canada, Australia and the UK. The perspective is generally that of developed nations.

Part I describes the literature base with instruction on where and how to find resources, many of which are non-traditional. It annotates 150 resources written since 1985 categorizing them under the following headings: General Information; Goals and Purposes; Power, Race and Class; Program Development; Program Descriptions; Women as Learners; Learning Environments and Instructional Approaches; Curriculum Development and Learning Resources; Literacy Workers; Resource Lists/bibliographies; and Journal Issues.

Part II moves to an analysis of the literature by looking at some related issues, trends [see BOX 1] and gaps. It provides an overview of the work on women as learners and offers a sampler of inclusive, learner-centered, woman-positive teaching practices.

The guide concludes with a list of references cited and an appendix with organizational sources for information and materials.

Status quo or critical literacy?

Goals and purposes of literacy programming for women differ, sometimes radically. Imel and Kerka point out the divergence between those programs which maintain the status quo i.e. help women

BOX 1

Trends in the literature on women and literacy

Several trends indicate to the authors that a robust literature on the subject is emerging.
They find that:

- Literature discussing issues of power, race and class is increasing.
- The topic of violence and its effects on women literacy learners is appearing.
- Increasing diversity exists in the amount and types of materials related to instruction in women-centered literacy programs.
- Because of its emphasis on education and training and because of the predominance of women as welfare clients, the topic of welfare reform is appearing with increasing frequency in the literature related to women and literacy.
- The topic of adult literacy workers is being examined from a number of perspectives.
- The research base is expanding.

Women and Literacy: Guide to the Literature and Issues for Woman-Positive Programs, pp.48 - 50.

BOX 2

Learner-centered, woman-positive?

...some sources suggest that learner-centered (placing learners at the center of a learning activity) may not always be woman-positive (providing positive experience for all women). Although learner-centered programming "may help resolve some of the authority issues inherent in...teacher-centered programming," it tends to make "invisible certain kinds of relationships among students, among workers, and among students and workers...[especially those based on] differences in race, sex, class backgrounds, abilities, sources of income, immigration status, and so on" (Lloyd, Ennis and Atkinson, 1994,p.25) Lee (1994) uses examples of two learner-centered classroom scenes she observed to raise questions concerning some fundamental concepts and principles of progressive approaches to adult education suggesting that such terms as facilitating, enabling, listening, responding and empowering need to be examined critically for how they work in practice. *Women and Literacy: Guide to the Literature and Issues for Woman-Positive Programs*, p.45.

function in their traditionally ascribed social roles —parent, spouse, worker— and those which promote critical literacy, i.e. develop skills to question the status of women in society. They do not underplay the variety among the strands of feminism, from radical to socialist, which are reflected in positions taken on all the issues.

Other issues include whether programs should be designed for women only, whether "learner-centered" is synonymous with "woman-positive" [See BOX 2] and whether the status and role of literacy workers (who are predominantly women) need to be addressed more critically. [LS]

To order: *Women and Literacy: Guide to the Literature and Issues for Woman-Positive Programs*, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, College of Education, The Ohio State University, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090

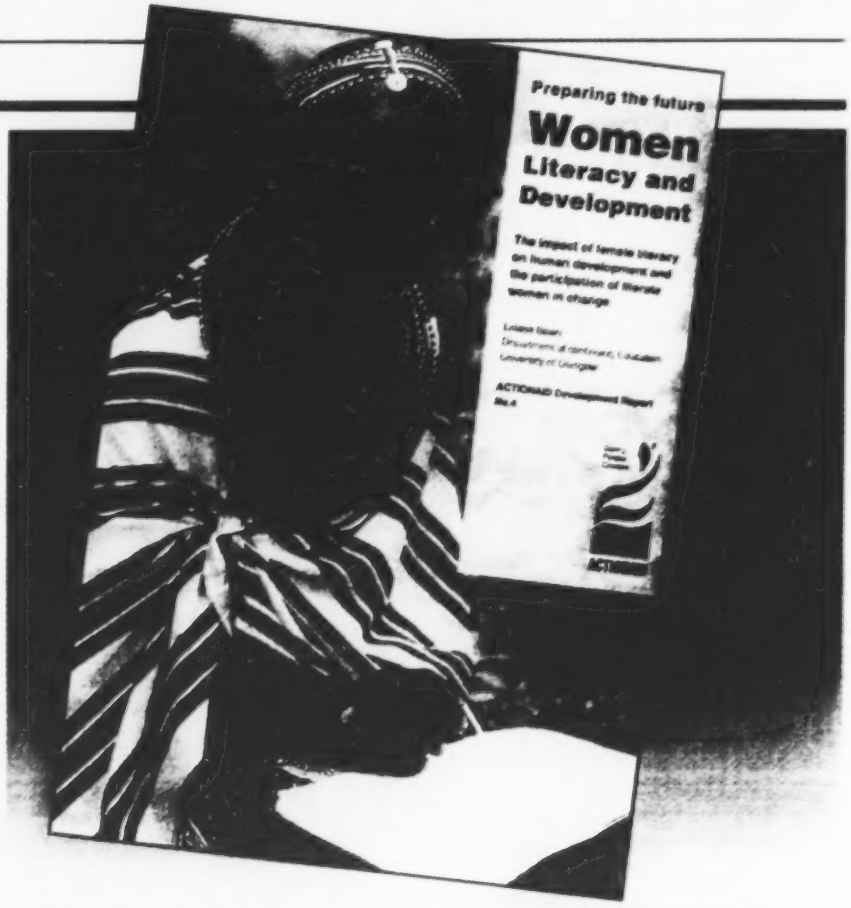
Preparing the Future: Women, Literacy and Development

By Lalage Bown, ActionAid Development Report No. 4, UK, 1990, 56 pp. (ISBN 1-872-502-08-3).

Subtitled "The impact of female literacy on human development and the participation of literate women in change," this report reads like a companion to the ERIC *Guide to Women and Literacy*. The author, a researcher and Director of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Glasgow, wrote this report in 1990 for ActionAid, a British development agency.* It sets out to examine the claims being promoted during International Literacy Year about the effects of women's literacy in developing nations.

Professor Bown reveals some unmapped territory of adult women's literacy. She begins by pointing out that almost all the so-called 'proofs of effects" relate to women who have been to school rather than women who began their literacy learning as adults. Bown therefore used an exhaustive research process to find 44 pertinent case studies from the previous five years on which to base her report. They were carried out by ActionAid, by the British Overseas Development Administration (ODA), and by other researchers, with two by the author herself. The countries reported on were Bangladesh, Belize, Brazil, Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia, Chile, Ecuador, Gambia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Yemen, Zaire, and Zimbabwe.

In the space of so brief a report, Bown has captured the complexity of the issue, the disappointments and the hopes. Interspersed with solid data, tables and analysis, are the voices of researchers, field



workers and women from literacy programs presented in an attractive readable document format.

She acknowledges the failure of most programs in the past and the difficulty of tracking progress when governments use different definitions and sometimes questionable data collection processes [see BOX]. She also acknowledges that many of the project reports she studied were vague in their assessment of both qualitative and quantitative outcomes. But she hones the questions that need to be answered and offers what she considers better ways of designing programs and tracking outcomes.

Several observations are worth highlighting. Noting that the current emphasis on providing schooling for girls is not sufficient, Bown quotes another researcher who suggested "plausibly, that schooling of girls inevitably takes place within existing power structures and is not very likely to encourage initiative for or skills for change. Adult literacy programmes are more likely to have the kinds of flexible curricula which encourage a will to change." (38)

In another instance, Bown recognizes the impossibility of singling out the effects of literacy from other social and economic changes. She prefaces her conclusions with a warning that this division is slightly artificial "since some of the most successful projects

Statistics on literacy in developing countries: deceit from the bottom up

There is an inherent unreliability in official statistics about literacy. Literacy activities in many countries is done by persons conscripted through national service schemes or some form of mobilisation (e.g. of university students or secondary school pupils or army recruits). It is not in their interest to report failures. The example of Mexico emerges in Archer and Costello (1990). There literacy teaching is carried out by *promoters* who are secondary school students doing the work as part of their compulsory social service and if they could not report success, they would fail themselves. Archer and Costello quote one promoter as saying: "We were forced to lie. if we did not have 12 people enrolled and an 80% pass rate then we were threatened with failing our social service. So we lied to make it easier for ourselves and the INEA* workers would never come to check up because they wanted to believe our lies: it looked good for them. It was deceit from the bottom up."

*INEA= The National Institute of Adult Education

Preparing the Future: Women, Literacy and Development , p.21-22.

combined social and other objectives and the effects of literacy as such could not easily be isolated." (28)

Despite these disclaimers, Bown believes that the case studies provide indicators of positive effects of literacy on adult women at social, economic and personal levels.

Among the social effects posited are:

- A greater likelihood of making use of child health-care techniques in the home;
- A greater readiness to present children for immunization;
- Cleaner homes and better nutrition;
- An enhanced readiness to send children, including daughters, to school;
- A greater disposition to space families.

The economic effects include:

- A greater capacity to mobilize credit and greater willingness to use banks;
- Readiness to participate in and to establish new forms of economic organizations.

Personal effects include:

- A readiness to influence family decisions on such matters as the marriage age of girls;
- A greater disposition to cooperate in socio-economic organizations;
- A new capacity for leadership in church and welfare organizations;
- A readiness to organize against injustice and for positive advocacy on social and economic matters. (4)

The report makes suggestions for government policy to ensure more spending and effort on adult women's literacy including making it a requirement, not an afterthought or option, in aid packages that touch on education, health, income generation, agriculture or women's promotion. It also suggests ideas on the best curricula and the most appropriate approaches insisting that women must be involved in designing their programmes.

An appendix provides an excellent checklist for the participation of women in development projects. It begins with a clear language definition of gender, gender roles and gender needs before giving the characteristics of development activities that meet women's needs.

More telling is the list of activities that can have a negative impact by failing to address women's needs or by leaving them worse off practically or strategically. These include many initiatives which may sound positive on the surface such as new agricultural practices (e.g. line transplant-ing meaning heavier workload) or a commercial afforestation project (when women need to graze domestic livestock.)

The inclusion of the text of a speech by the Minister for Overseas Development to a conference on Women and Literacy was disconcerting (I could not decide if it was unintentional, although I suspect it may have been included as a goodwill gesture to a funder). As a politician, the Minister had been briefed to say all the things that an aid agency might want to hear. But her personal beliefs kept surfacing; as a member of the public she still accepted uncritical assumptions about the singleness of literacy and the possibility of eradicating illiteracy. She ended her speech with the following commitment: "I hope that concrete proposals will emerge both for us as a government, and for the organisations involved, because the people who matter are the people who today are illiterate and *in a year or so's time we want to make sure that they are literate.*"[italics mine] (46)

If I wanted to introduce someone to the topic of women and literacy, this report and the Imel/Kerka Guide both identify and embody many of the current trends and problems. [LS]

*ActionAid more recently published the *REFLECT Mother Manual* on literacy reviewed in *LAC* Vol. 12, No.1.

To order: £5.50 + postage and handling. Inquire about exact amount from ActionAid, Chataway House, Leach Road, Somerset, UK TA20 1FA, Tel: 011-44-1460-62972.

Chronological Conference Listing

Local

Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec
22nd International Conference
March 13 -15, 1997
Montreal, QC
Information:
Tel: (514) 847-1324;
Fax: (514) 281-5187

SPRINGBOARDS '97
Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) & Quebec Reading Association (QRA)
April 19 - 20, 1997
Longueuil, QC
Information: Linda Allen.
Tel: (819) 563-0770;
Fax: (819) 820-0500

National/International

Writing Across the Curriculum Third National Conference
25th Birthday Celebration
February 6 - 8, 1997
Charleston, SC
Information:
Tel: (803)953-1454;
Fax: (803) 953-5822

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
March 11- 15, 1997
Orlando, FL
Information: TESOL, 1600 Cameron Street, #300, Alexandria, VA 22314.
Tel:m(713) 836-0774;
fax: (703) 836-7864

College Composition and Communication
March 12 -15, 1997
Phoenix, AZ
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096

Microcomputers in Education: Mastering the Electronic Classroom
March 17 -19, 1997
Tempe, AZ
Information: Barbara Ford, Arizona State Univ., Box 870908, Tempe, AZ 85287-0908, Tel: (602) 965-7363; Fax: (602) 965-8887; e-mail: mec97@asu.edu; WWW: http://MEC.ed.asu.edu/97/

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
March 22 - 25, 1997
Baltimore, MD
Information: ASCD, 1 800-933-ASCD or (7030) 549-9110, then press 2

The Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning
March 24 - 26, 1997
Ottawa, ON
Information: Canadian Alliance for Lifelong Learning, Tel: (613) 993-2810; Fax: (613) 941-1164; E-mail: call@gsro.carleton.ca
Web Site: http://gcll.carleton.ca

British Dyslexia Society
Fourth International Conference
"Dyslexia: Biological Bases, Identification and Intervention"
April 1 - 4, 1997
University of York
Information: BDA Conference Office, Department of Psychology, University of York, YO1 5DD, UK

Second Annual Workplace Learning Conference
April 27 - 29, 1997
Milwaukee, WI
Information:
Tel: 1-800 446-0399; Website: http://www.cew.wisc.edu

Conference Board of Canada Reaching for Success: Business & Education Working Together
May 4 - 6, 1997
(Training sessions, May 2)
Calgary, AB
Information: Dina Derenzis, Conference Board of Canada, 255 Smyth Road, Ottawa, ON, K1H 8M7, Canada, Tel: (613) 526-4249 or 1 800-267-0666; Fax (613) 521-0661; E-mail: registrar@conferenceboard.ca

International Reading Association
42nd Annual Convention
May 4 - 7, 1997
Atlanta, GA
Information: IRA, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE, USA 19714-8139,
Tel: (302) 731-1600, ext 226;
Fax: (302) 731-1057.

Commission on Adult Basic Education '97 (COABE)
May 28 - 31, 1997
Detroit, MI
Information: (810) 340-6841

Learned Societies
Theme: "Communications"
May 31 - June 14, 1997
Memorial University
Information:
Tel: (709) 737-4360;
Fax: (709) 737-4449;
E-mail:
learneds@morgan.ucs.mun.ca

The 13th Computers and Writing Conference
Kapi'olani Community College, University of Hawaii
June 5 - 9, 1997
Honolulu, Hawaii
Information: Computers and Writing Conference 1997, Arts and Science Department, Kapi'olani Community College, 4303 Diamond Head Road, Honolulu, HI 96816,
E-mail:cw97@lahi.kcc.hawaii.edu

Canadian Library Association

June 18 - 22, 1997
Ottawa, ON
Information: CLA, 200 Elgin Street, # 602, Ottawa, ON K2P 1L5, Tel: (613) 232-9625; Fax: (613) 563-9895

UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education

"Adult Education: A Key for the Twenty-First Century"
July 14 - 18, 1997
Hamburg Germany
Information: UNESCO Institute for Education, Feldbrunnenstrasse 58, 20148 Hamburg, Germany, Tel: (+49 40) 44 80 41-0; Fax: (+49 40) 410 77 23; E-mail: uie@unesco.org

10th European Conference on Reading

"Literacy, A Human Right: Bringing Cultures Closer"
August 3 - 5, 1997
Brussels, Belgium
Information: Albert De Smedt, Conference Secretariat, Mechelsbroekstraat 9, B-2820, Bonheiden, Belgium.

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

November
Detroit, MI
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096

Modern Language Association (MLA)

December 27 - 30, 1997
Toronto, ON
Information: MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 1003-6981

Summer Institutes

Summer Institutes NCTE College Section Summer Institute

"Technology and the Teaching of Literature"
June 1 - 4, 1997
Myrtle Beach, SC
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096

Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms

With Dr. Cynthia Selfe and Dr. Gail Hawisher
June 16 - 27, 1997
Michigan Technological University Houghton, MI
Information: Office of Conferences and Institutes, Michigan Technological University, Tel: (906) 487-2263; Fax: (906) 487-3101; E-mail: klenz@mtu.edu or gjanssen@mtu.edu

LITERACY & TECHNOLOGY

June 24 -26, 1997 CONTINUING TH

The Centre for Literacy Montreal Quebec Canada
in cooperation with the **Georgia Tech Satellite Literacy Program**

Since 1990, The Centre for Literacy has sponsored summer institutes on topics related to literacy. Since 1994, the Summer Institute has focused on literacy and technology. We have brought researchers, front line deliverers, policy makers and technology developers to one table to share insights, innovative practices and concerns.

A sampler of key questions

- How accurate are International and national surveys of literacy such as IALS and NALS in real terms? What do they mean for adult education policy and provision?
- Can the promise of technology for improving literacy teaching and learning be achieved?
- How are learning technologies currently being used in workplace settings in Canada, the US, and the UK ?
- Does technology increase or decrease the barriers faced by women with low level literacy skills in accessing education? Are issues of class, gender, and race given due weight in public debate about literacy and technology?

Program description

The institute has been designed to accommodate 35 participants in a collaborative settings. Presentations are brief and informal leaving broad opportunities for discussion and exchange. Part of each day is set aside to address individual questions /interests with time for feedback from colleagues.

Who should register?

Teachers, tutors, trainers, researchers and policy-makers from all levels, in education, government or workplace.

Fees

$300. (includes materials, continental breakfasts, refreshments and lunches)

Measuring outcomes in volunteer programs

The inherent difficulty of measuring outcomes in adult literacy programs is compounded in the volunteer sector. But new models of management are being developed that lend themselves to both quantitative and qualitative forms of evaluation.

One of these models described by Literacy Volunteers of America [see BOX] has been put into practice and documented by a Canadian organization and made available in a publication entitled *Testing the Balance: 50/50 Management in a Volunteer Tutor Program.*

Prospects Literacy Association is a community-based volunteer organization operating in Edmonton since 1980. It has had an independent governing board since becoming a registered charitable organization in 1991. In a given year, they have up to 200 students and 200 tutors with between 80 to100 matched pairs at one time. Another 75 to 100 students participate in community-based workshops in reading, writing, spelling, math and family literacy.

Why bother to monitor?
Faced with dwindling core funds and increasing demands, Prospects found itself in the position of many volunteer programs in the country. In their search for ways of managing resources more effectively, they came across the 50/50 concept and decided to implement it. Part way through the process, realizing that others could benefit from their experience, they requested and received funding to document their work.[1]

They do not provide extensive detail about the concept itself, referring readers to the original text. Nor do they write a report on recruiting students and volunteers. The focus is on the results of implementing 50/50 at Prospects. They detail their process — the role of the advisory committee, the collection of data, and the tracking of time for both paid and volunteer staff over several months. They found ways of measuring time spent on intake activities, support activities and board activities.

The findings relate specifically to their own program, but the process and the implications of the findings are pertinent to all volunteer programs. They found that paid staff give another 19% in volunteer time. In addition, they found that volunteers accounted for 36% of administrative work. Among the outcomes, they made some concrete decisions about reducing the number of new intakes to provide more quality support for matched pairs. Over two years, while reducing the overall number of tutors by one quarter, they increased the number of active tutors. Over three years, the percentage of inactive tutors was more than halved.

Prospects also outlines models of board responsibility and accountability and of fundraising that grow from the 50/50 concept. The concept can be adapted to other volunteer situations as well as literacy. Prospects has contributed an instructive case study to the field.

[1] Funding was provided by the National Literacy Secretariat and Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development.

To order: *Testing the Balance: 50/50 Management in a Volunteer Tutor Program*, by Maureen Sanders, Margaret Reine, Susan Devins, & Grace Wiebe, (ISBN 0-9699782-2-7), Prospects Literacy Association, 9913-108 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5H 1A5;
Tel: (403) 7323;
Fax: (403) 421-7324.

50/50 Management

50/50 Management is a concept for managing volunteer tutor programs that was developed by Anne DuPrey for Literacy Volunteers of America (1992). As explained by the team at Prospects Literacy, the basic premise is "that the key to effective volunteer management of literacy programs is maintaining a 50/50 balance between the 'intake' and 'support' focuses of a program. A 50/50 balance means that fifty per cent of the organization's energies and resources will be directed towards recruitment and training of volunteers and toward recruitment and assessment of students, while the other fifty per cent will be directed towards support and retention of existing tutors and students.

Finding this 50/50 balance helps to ensure that retention of participants will be increased, so that there will be less need to continually recruit and train or assess new people. The organization thus becomes more efficient and cost-effective. The 50/50 concept provides a framework for examining an organization's current situation and helping it to achieve this balance while continuing to operate the program.(3 -4)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The New Reading Disc Workshops

The New Reading Disc is a multi-media CD-ROM that helps adults learn to read and write. Designed for learners in adult literacy, it has also been found effective with ESL learners.

The Centre for Literacy is offering two workshops on The New Reading Disc. The first workshop is designed for anyone who is interested but has not seen or used the disc. The second is for anyone who has some acquaintance or experience with the disc — including those who have tested or purchased it—and want to create Canadian materials.

1. An Introductory Workshop
Date: Friday, January 24, 97
Time: 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Place: Dawson College
Fee: $70. (includes break and materials)

You will learn
- how to use The New Reading Disc through hands on experience.
- how to adapt the program for individual and group use.
- how to use the author to create a new article and edit articles (using existing images and entering new text and sound).

2. Authoring with The New Reading Disc: Creating Canadian Content
Date: Sat., January 25, 97
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Place: Dawson College
Fee: $100. (includes break, lunch and materials)

You will
- revisit *The New Reading Disc* - its approach to developing literacy skills and its application in the classroom.
- use the author to create new Canadian articles, debates and letters.
- explore ways of adapting new content to suit a range of students and to support different learning objectives.

You will learn how to add new pictures via the author by:
- re-using existing photos • adding images from a digital camera
- scanning images
- using drawing packages
- using PhotoCDs
  You will have the opportunity to practice adding your own images.

New video will be added from ready digitized .avi files. The process for digitizing and palletizing new video will be explained. Both workshops will be participatory with opportunities to share examples of good practice.

About the facilitator:
Lesley Crichton is a senior project manager in the multimedia department at Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD) in the UK. Starting as a primary teacher, she eventually worked in adult education as a basic skills tutor before joining CTAD in the 1980s. She was project manager for *The New Reading Disc* , and has trained many teachers and trainers in schools and colleges in its use. Currently she is working on other versions of the disc.

The New Reading Disc and L.I.R.E. now available in Canada

Cost: $800. plus GST. In Quebec, add 6.5% PST. Discounts available on multiple purchase of 2 or more of the single user and network user versions. A purchase order is required. Preview copies of The New Reading Disc are accessible at The Centre and at several sites across Canada. L.I.R.E.is available for preview only at The Centre.

Information:
The Centre for Literacy,
(514) 931-8731, ext. 1415;
Fax: (514) 931-5181; E-mail:
literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
Web site:
http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm

Mail purchase order to
The Centre for Literacy,
3040 Sherbrooke Street West,
Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4.

L.I.R.E.

L.I.R.E. stands for **Logiciel Interactif de Réentrainement à l'Ecriture,** the French version of The New Reading Disc. It was developed by a software producer in France in partnership with the UK creators.

Conference of the Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL)
Adult Learning in the Global Village
"Re-Thinking how we think"
Leader: Rosalind Fritz
Saturday, January 25, 1997
Concordia University,
Loyola Campus, Montreal
Information: (514) 848-2036;
Fax: (514) 848-4520

Call for Entries
1997 NOVA Corporation Global Best Awards
for business-education partnerships promoting Science Literacy for the World of Work to be awarded at the 8th Annual Reaching for Success: Business & Education Working Together conference
May 4- 6, 1997 in Calgary
Deadline: January 17, 1997
Information and forms: Linda Scott, The Conference Board of Canada, 255 Smyth Road, Ottawa, ON K1H 8M7, Tel: 1-888-801-8818 or (613) 526-3280; Fax: (613) 526-4857; E-mail: scott@conferenceboard.ca; Internet: http://www.conferenceboard.ca/nbec

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW)

The Janus Project: New Learning Technologies & Women

A two-day workshop to unveil recent research findings & discuss the implications

March 21 - 22, 1997, Montreal, Quebec

What are the adult learning opportunities offered to women by the new technologies? What are the barriers?

Hear Keynote Speaker **Heather Menzies**
well-known Canadian researcher and writer on women and technology, author of *Whose Brave New World? The Information Highway and the New Economy* (1996)

Why should you be there?

- To hear the outcomes of a CCLOW research project into new technologies and adult learning opportunities for women, presented by researchers Jennifer O'Rourke and Linda Schachter (Hands On Management, British Columbia).
- To learn about other pertinent research in the area and to identify gaps.
- To share your experience, concerns, and knowledge about the impact of new learning technologies on women's lives.
- To network and develop ideas for future action.

Space is limited to 100 participants* (including the presenters and facilitators) First come, first served.

*For women's organizations, a small number of travel and accommodation bursaries are available.

Please contact CCLOW for an application form.
Information: Tel: (416) 699-1909; Fax: (416) 699-2145;
E-mail: cclow@web.net

Deadline for registration: February 28, 1997

Call for Voices
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
CRIAW '97

Theme: Our Bodies/Our Lives
November 7 - 9, 1997
Fredericton, NB
Women of all ages and backgrounds are invited to present research or community-based responses to the conference theme. Although the committee welcomes sub-missions on a wide range of issues, priority will be given to those on the theme.

Information: CRIAW Program Committee, 519 Beaverbrook Crt., Fredericton, NB, E3B 1X6, Cnada. Tel:(506) 450-2632; Fax: (506) 451-8389; E-mail: criaw97@brunswickmicro.nb.ca
Deadline for proposals: April 1, 1997

Assembly on Computers in English (ACE)

The Assembly on Computers in English (ACE) is an NCTE group which promotes communication and cooperation among individuals with an interest in computers and the English language arts. ACE presents programs, promotes an increase in articles and publications on computers and English and encourages responsible development of software. Most ACE functions take place at the NCTE convention.

In the ACE newsletter, which members receive three times a year, teachers share projetcs and tips oncomputers and networking for English classes. There are also opportunities for exchange on the Internet through the ACE-L discussion group. Their Web site is at http://www.daedalus.com/ACE/

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June 26 -28, 1997

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Information: NCTE Professional Development Services, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL61801-1096. Tel: 1-800-369-6283 or (217) 328-3870, ext.203. Fax: (217) 328-0977; E-mail: pds@ncte.org

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The Centre for Literacy offers an open invitation for teachers and tutors to book appointments to preview a selection of 65 software products in adult literacy and basic skills, from producers in Canada, the US and the UK. Resources include software from Autoskill International, CTAD, Curriculum Associates, Interactive Knowledge, Tom Snyder Productions, TRO Learning and many more. STAPLE, The New Reading Disc, A Day in the Life, Oregon Trail II are among the favourites.

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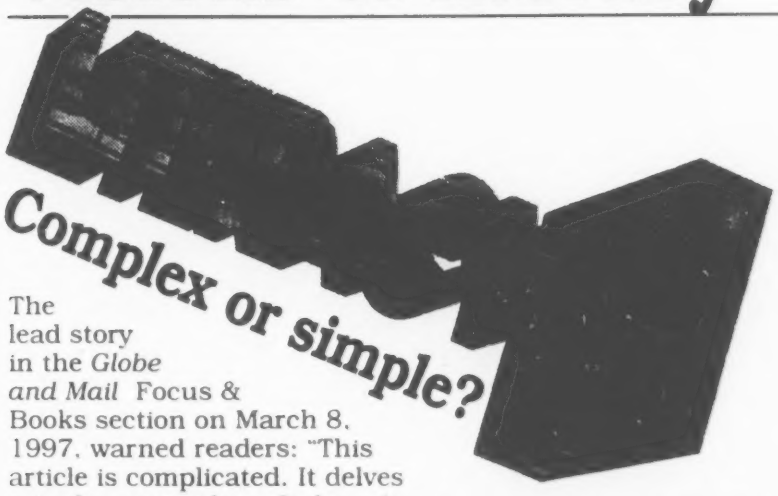
Vol. 12 No. 4 • 1997

Literacy across the curriculum

including Medi Focus

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

Visions of literacy



The lead story in the *Globe and Mail* Focus & Books section on March 8, 1997, warned readers: "This article is complicated. It delves into disparate ideas. It doesn't seek straightforward answers. It is about simplicity."

The article highlighted the tension between the increasing complexity of our lives and the corresponding drive for simplicity that pervades our culture. It examined several historical, political and economic illustrations. It could just as easily have made its case by looking at literacy.

Literacy has taken its place on the public agenda in North America with a series of simple slogans and simple proposed solutions. It seems like a motherhood issue, and it is —recognizing that even motherhood is no longer simple in this age of genetic engineering.

LAC has always understood literacy as a labyrinth and has attempted to explain some of the complexities in ways that opened paths for teachers, researchers and policy makers without being simplistic. This issue exemplifies our practice.

In the Classroom lays out a grid representing two of the different theoretical approaches to literacy, one which sees literacy as a set of skills, the other which sees it as a set of contextualized practices. The two perspectives foreground the ideas that guide most literacy programs anywhere today and the divisions that exist between the two. They represent two world views.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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The Centre for Literacy Montreal, Quebec

Literacy across the curriculum

The Centre for Literacy
3040 Sherbrooke Street West,
Montreal, Quebec, Canada,
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The Centre for Literacy/Le centre d'alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada, and Dawson College.

Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

These oppositions are further illuminated in the extended response by Stan Jones to Brian Street and Harvey Graff on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). In "Ending the myth of the 'Literacy Myth'" Jones offers evidence from another group of disciplines to support his claim that IALS provides a more complex public definition of literacy than ever before and new ways of measuring it.

Some of the controversies surrounding the impact and uses of technologies on literacy are accented in the report from the Winter Institute on Technology and Adult Basic Education co-sponsored by The Centre and Georgia Tech in Atlanta in January [pp.6 -9]. Tom Reeves has a vision of machines as cognitive tools offering new learning opportunities for adults. Rand Bohrer has lived the experience of having his mind reconfigured through mastering the Web after a stroke; he believes other adults with disabilities, including literacy problems, can benefit from a non-linear way of gathering, creating and disseminating information. Tom Sticht lays bare the conceptual contradictions in recent American policy on literacy and adult basic education. All these presentations hark back to the two theoretical views.

Coming full circle, participatory literacy practice in a developing country is the subject of a report commissioned by a British aid agency and reviewed on p.18. Examining the gap between the anticipated and actual outcomes of a program in Uganda, the report casts light on questions that run across nations. How does an agency test its assumptions about communities, needs and motives? How does it respond to outcomes that do not match its own philosophy? Is the concept of "partnerships" viable or is it simply a fiction to provide funding agencies the illusion of work among equals?

And, a Canadian perspective on training and accreditation for literacy practitioners [p.19] also inadvertently reveals the conflict between philosophies of literacy.

Which brings me to a warning to readers: "This [issue] is complicated. It delves into disparate ideas. It doesn't seek straightforward answers. It is about [literacy]." [LS]

Coming soon: A new format

This is the last issue of *Literacy Across then Curriculum* in which *Media Focus* will be a supplement.

Beginning with Volume 13, the title of the newsletter will be *Literacy Across the Curriculum & Media Focus*. Articles about media will be designated but integrated into the single 28-page newsletter. Judy Brandeis remains media editor.

See Media Focus p. 3

1 On best ways of making meaning

The force of my argument is to suggest that there are "best ways" of representing meanings: in some circumstances language may be the best medium; in some a drawing may be; in others colour may be the most apt medium for expression. In all signs which appear as messages in actual situations of communication — as against internal messages, the signs formed in the brain in reading, seeing, feeling or "just" thinking — many modes of representation are always in use at the same time. Some may, however, be dominant or foregrounded. In a legal document, language seems so obviously the most significant medium that we hardly ever... attend to typographic features, or to aspects of layout, or to quality of paper.

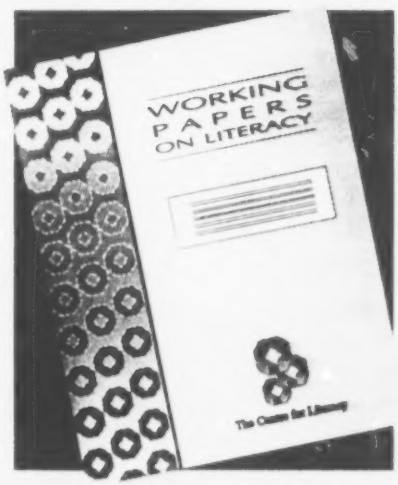
Gunther Kress, *Before Writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy* (Routledge: London & New York, 1997), p.38.

2 On teaching and access to information

All teachers working within public educational systems have a de facto commitment to the principles of open and universal access to information, such access providing for their pupils the basis for their future participation in a democracy. This commitment to universal access is also necessarily a commitment to preserving the independence of at least some information producers and centers (public service broadcasting systems, educational institutions and research centers, public libraries, galleries and museums, etc.) from undue commercial or government interference. For without such independence, access is of little value. Indeed, it may be as positively dangerous as drinking from a contaminated well.

Len Masterman, " A Rationale for Media Education," *Media Literacy in the Information Age*, edited by Robert Kubey, Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick NJ & London, 1997), p.62. (See Reviews, *Media Focus*, p.8)

Announcing a series of Working Papers on Literacy



The Centre for Literacy is pleased to announce a new series of Working Papers on Literacy. In the last and this current issue of LAC, we have published extended articles on IALS, one by Dr. Brian Street on *Literacy, Society, Economy: A review* and a response by Dr. Stan Jones on *Ending the Myth of the 'Literacy Myth'*.

Because interest in the subject is high, we are reprinting these articles as the first two in a series of occasional papers. Bound copies can be ordered for $5 per Working Paper from The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, QC, Canada, H3Z 1A4.
The texts will available on our website in late April.

Two different theoretical approaches to literacy and their implication for adult literacy programs

This grid was designed by Marc Fiedrich for his report Literacy in Circles? [See Reviews, p.18]. It offers one way of presenting the different theoretical approaches that underlie much of the current debate about literacy. For teachers and tutors, it may help you locate your own practice in a formal system of beliefs. (Ed)

Question	"Autonomous" approach	"Ideological" approach
What is literacy?	A set of technical skills which enhances the capacities of those who own them, both through learning and through using them.	There is no one literacy. Different literacy practices exist and develop within different social contexts. The role that technical skills assume is dependent on their social context and the way people learn and use them.
What does it mean to be illiterate?	To be illiterate is a sign of deprivation. Many view illiteracy as a disease which causes poverty and consequently castigate those who deny illiterate people access to literacy.	Illiteracy can be a problem, but does not necessarily have to be one. It depends on what people need reading and writing skills for, and what alternative means are at their disposition to achieve their goals.
Which academic disciplines are currently shaping the debate? (Notwithstanding overlaps)	Linguistics Pedagogy Psychology Anthropology	Ethnography Social Anthropology Cultural Studies Socio-Linguistics
What are the questions they commonly ask about literacy?	• What is the impact of literacy on people? • How is literacy different from orality? • How does literacy operate within modern institutions?	• How do people shape literacies? • How do local literacies function? • How do they relate to local culture and power? • What is the role of language in literacies? • How are literacies embedded in wider structures of communication?

Question	"Autonomous" approach	"Ideological" approach
How can the widespread failure of adult literacy programs be explained?	• Lack of funding and commitment from governments and agencies • Lack of learner motivation (due to various reasons) • Poor implementation of teaching concepts • Difficulties in accommodating speakers of minority languages • Failure to create a literate environment (particularly in rural areas)	All the reasons stated for the autonomous view are accepted to some extent. Additionally: • Many s have failed to integrate local literacy perceptions and thus alienated learners by trying to convert them to an imaginary universal literacy • Learners are often regarded as passive recipients, rather than active creators.
What would need to change to make them more successful?	Much has been tried already, so that there is little methodological innovation forthcoming at present. The emphasis is on raising the profile of literacy among governments and donors.	Raising the profile of literacy is a vital step, but more importantly, common perceptions and assumptions about literacy need to change. Literacy has a potential to change peoples' lives, but whether it does so or not depends on how relevant it is to learners. In methodological terms, this warrants a more active involvement of learners, a focus on learner generated materials which are based on their existing knowledge, and a genuine recognition of the local context in all stages of the design and implementation of programs. Adding to that, measures of success would need to be negotiated in each program separately.
Who are the main academic proponents?	Ong (1982); Goody (1968; 1977;1986); Olson (1977; 1988)	Street (1984; 1993; 1995); Baynham (1995); Barton (1994)

Reprinted with permission from *Literacy in Circles?* by Marc Fiedrich. WORKING PAPER No. 2. Dec. 1996. ACTIONAID.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Winter Institute on Technology in Adult Basic Education was co-sponsored by Georgia Tech and the Centre for Literacy. It was held in Atlanta, Jan. 29-31, 1997.

Computers as cognitive tools

To date, research results on the effects of computer-based instruction have not been impressive, according to Professor Tom Reeves, a well-known researcher on educational communications and technology who presented to the Institute.

Multimedia does not guarantee learning any more than the presence of a library on a campus guarantees learning.

The learning depends on the quality of the interaction between the learner and the tool. The quality of interaction is a function of the skills and experience that learners have with the tool and the degree to which the tool has been designed to support the interaction.

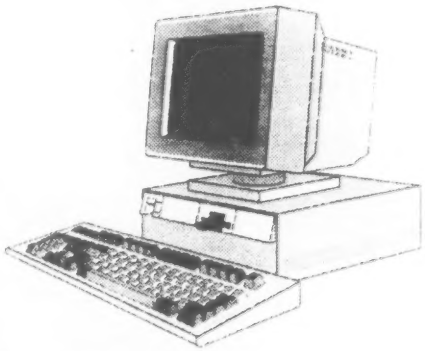
Reeves warns against The Big Lie that claims technology makes learning easy and automatic. A possible new direction lies in using computers as cognitive tools [see sidebar] which can make learning meaningful, not easy.

The model of web-based learning is more complex than traditional classroom models. It is an expanded model of learning where "opportunity to learn" becomes "opportunity to construct learning," involving ownership of the task.

The Web can be used to promote self-monitoring, planning, reflection and other metacognitive skills identified as critical to lifelong learning. According to Reeves, the pioneer educators exploring the integration of the WWW into teaching and learning have been very creative. The applications will have to come from the field.

Examples of cognitive tools

- multimedia construction programs
- WWW site construction programs
- Word processing software
- Databases
- Spreadsheets



Differences between traditional uses of computers in education and using the computer as a cognitive tool:

Educational technology

Traditional view	*Cognitive view*
• Learners learn "from" technology	• Learners learn "with" technology
• Knowledge is transmitted via various media	• Knowledge is constructed, represented, shared
• Learners passively receive instructional messages	• Learners collaborate to solve problems or accomplish tasks
• Interaction is occasional and often artificial	• Interaction is authentic
• Instructional design is in the hands of experts	• Instructional design is in the hands of learners guided by teachers

Recommended reading:

Jonassen, D.H., & Reeves, T.C. (1996). Learning with Technology: Using Computers as Cognitive Tools. In D.H. Jonassen, (Ed.). *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology*. New York:Macmillan. pp. 693-719.

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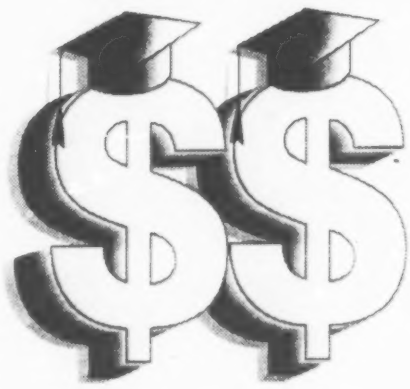
Double duty dollars: Investing in adult education

by Thomas G. Sticht

[This article, originally titled "Bridging Practice and Policy by Research In Adult Education," is a summary of remarks made on January 31, 1997, at the Winter Institute on Technology in Adult Basic Education.]

Many of the same people who want to reform education to get parents more involved in their children's education are talking about pouring billions of dollars into preschool and primary grade education, while at the same time they talk about (and, indeed have already taken actions) gutting education and training programs for the children's parents, particularly if they happen to need welfare assistance or some other type of retraining. For instance, the National Workplace Literacy Program that brought basic skills education to hundreds of thousands of parents in the workplace has been canceled in favor of block grants to states.

Yet there is compelling evidence to argue that one of the best ways to reform education for children in the school is to provide more and better education to their parents, including those on welfare. In this article, I will first address some of the cultural beliefs that I think have undermined interest in and funding for adult literacy education. Then I will discuss the intergenerational aspects of adult's education on children's educational



achievement. Finally, I will give an example of a policy-oriented message that colleagues and I in the San Diego Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning (CWELL) have formulated and disseminated to policy makers to illustrate one example of an attempt to bridge practice and policy by research.

Cultural beliefs that hinder adult education

On Sunday, October 13, 1991, a San Diego newspaper reprinted an article by *Chicago Tribune* columnist Joan Beck that argued for early childhood education because "half of adult intellectual capacity is already present by age 4 and 80 percent by age 8... The opportunity to influence [a child's] basic intelligence - considered to be a stable characteristic by age 17 - is greatest in early life." A year earlier in the same newspaper on October 14, 1990, an adult literacy educator was quoted as saying, "Between the ages of zero to 4 we have learned half of everything we'll ever learn in our lives. Most of that has to do with language, imagination and inquisitiveness."

A report by the Department of Defense shows how these beliefs about the possibility of doing much for adults after age 17 can affect policy. After studying the job performance and post-service lives of "lower aptitude," less literate personnel, on February 24, 1990, the Director of Accession Policy of the Department of Defense commented in the *Washington Post*, "The lesson is that low-aptitude people, whether in the military or not, are always going to be at a disadvantage. That's a sad conclusion." Then on April 8, 1990, another column in the *Washington Post* quoted one of the researchers saying, "...by the age of 18 or 19, it's too late. The school system in early childhood is the only place to really help, and that involves heavy participation by the parents."

Neither the articles about intellectual development in early childhood nor the Department of Defense study elicited responses from the adult (or any other) education field challenging these conclusions and beliefs about human cognitive development. Yet, if true, these beliefs would have dire implications for the achievement of Goal 6 of the

[US] National Educational Goals, which states that by the year 2000 all adults will be literate. Further, these beliefs denigrate as apparently futile the work of those involved in the language and literacy education of youth and adults in any setting, including the military, job training, corrections, adult basic education, workplace literacy, and even family literacy.

But neither of the articles was true. First, there is no such thing as "half of one's intellect," because no one knows what zero or 100 percent intelligence is. Second, in the Department of Defense studies, over 80 percent of the personnel studied as "low aptitude" did, in fact, perform satisfactorily. And as veterans they had employment rates and earnings far exceeding their rates at the beginning of the study. But this conclusion would not have supported the Department of Defense's policy for wanting to recruit only "high quality" personnel: so they simply asserted that these adults were failures and would always be failures!

.... there is no such thing as "half of one's intellect," because no one knows what zero or 100 percent intelligence is.

BOX

Why adult education should be supported

• **Better educated adults** produce better educated children. Better educated parents send children to school better prepared to learn, with higher levels of language skills, knowledge about books, pencils and other literacy tools needed for school and life. Better educated mothers have healthier babies, smaller families, children better prepared to start school, and children who stay in school and learn more.

• **Better educated adults** demand and get better schooling for children. Wider Opportunities for Women in Washington, DC found that mothers in women's education programs, most of whom were on welfare, reported that at the end of their education program they spent more time with their children talking about school, helping them with their homework, taking them to the library, and reading to them. They also said their children attended school more, and showed improvements in their school grades, test scores, and reading. In visits to the homes of some of these mothers their children confirmed what their mothers had reported. Children said things like, "I do my homework just like Mommy!" or "she reads him and his sisters stories."

• **Better educated adults** provide better communities for learning. AC Rochester, a supplier of components for General Motors automobile manufacturing in New York State, was losing business and was in fear of closing, putting thousands of workers out of jobs. In response, management, labor union members, and educators got together, and provided adult education programs for employees. They provided full time education with full pay to over two hundred employees for up to ten months. These changes in workforce education permitted the introduction of new management and production techniques. In turn, these changes helped bring in several new contracts, including a billion dollar contract with Russia. This increased the local tax base for community services, including better public education.

• **Better educated adults** are more productive for society. Supervisors in six manufacturing companies near Chicago reported that even very brief (35-40 hours) adult job-related education programs made improvements in job training, job performance, promotability of participants, and productivity, such as scrap reduction, reduced paperwork, and less wastage. In addition, many of the adults said that after the company education program they read more to their children or grandchildren, thereby helping them do better in school. They were able to get a driver's license, stop people from ripping them off while shopping and engage in further education. Thus, an investment in adult education at work not only helped make the workplace more productive, it helped the schools be more productive by giving them better prepared children to work with and it made people more productive in the community.

The major cultural beliefs about cognitive development that pervade our society have lead many to underestimate the importance of adult literacy education. But that is a mistake. There is strong evidence for the intergenerational impact of adult education. (See BOX, p.8)

ROI: Return on Investment in adult education gives "Double Duty Dollars"

The San Diego Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning (CWELL) argues that outcomes of adult education show that "double duty dollars" can be obtained through the intergenerational transfer of educational benefits from parents to their children. When we provide adults with education and training, we invest in one generation, but we get a return on investment in two generations. We are not helping just one person, but an entire family. We are not just getting people off welfare roles, we are helping make the workforce more productive. Importantly, the investment in adult education improves productivity at work today: improving the productivity of the future workforce by reforming the schools will take decades.

For these reasons, adult education and training should play an even larger role in the welfare and workforce reforms that are being contemplated and implemented. By investing in the education of adults, we also make the schools more productive and the community more productive... Government agencies and other sponsors of education and welfare reform movements should know that they can obtain multiplier effects for investment in adult education.

By investing in the education of adults, we improve the educability of children.

Dr. Sticht is a member of the National Commission on Working Women. He served on the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and in 1989-91 he chaired the California Workforce Literacy Task Force established by the California State Legislature.
Information: Dr. Thomas Sticht, President and Senior Scientist, Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences, Inc. 2062 Valley View Blvd., El Cajon, CA 92019-2059; telephone/fax: (619) 444-9595; email: tsticht@mail.sdsu.edu.

An "idiot" on the Web

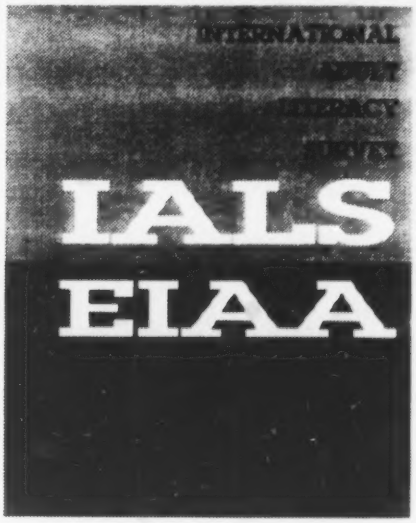
Meeting Rand Bohrer can be deceptive. After suffering a stroke four years ago in his late forties, he was left paralyzed, without speech or memory. Doctors held little hope for recovery, but a mentor in the rehab center where Rand was recuperating thought otherwise. A renowned pioneer in computers, he guided the patient in the use of computing technology and for reasons that no one can explain, new channels slowly opened in Rand's brain.

When he made his humourous self-deprecating presentation at the Winter Institute, he told us that on traditional IQ tests, he still scores as an idiot. One more reason to question our unqualified reliance on these empirical measures.

Rand Bohrer is now a senior researcher with the IMAGINE group at the College of Architecture, Georgia Tech, with a special interest in using computing technology, particularly the Web, to address the problems of learners, including himself, with physical and cognitive disabilities. He has just unveiled a virtual site guide to resources for people with disabilities in the state of Georgia.

He argues that uses of the Web for education are limited more by barriers of conception than by technology. While it is natural that we try to explain new forms by analogies to old forms, Bohrer says we have made an inappropriate choice in comparing Web creations to a book with its associations of author, fixed date of publication, canonical form and brand (bar code and price). In contrast, he sugg .s that the Web provides not only a new way to present material, but also a new way to gather/create/ disseminate material. The Web allows groups of experts and volunteers to collaboratively contribute in the creation of truly useful resource -bases. The real webmasters do not bring great sites into being by building up blocks of their own content or by exerting control. Instead, they are artists of removal — taking away barriers that block willing contributors from providing a flow of diverse material. To Bohrer, this contributory model suggests an agenda for adult education in relation to the Web.[LS]

Rand Bohrer can be reached by E-mail: rand@atlanta.com



Ending the myth of the 'Literacy Myth'

A response to critiques of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

by Stan Jones,
Centre for the Study of Adult Literacy, Carleton University

Harvey Graff (1996) and Brian Street (1996) have both claimed in recent issues of this newsletter that the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) misrepresents what literacy is and makes false claims about the relationship between literacy and other characteristics of individuals and societies. As the author of the data analysis chapters in the IALS international report, *Literacy Economy and Society*, and in the Canadian report, *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*, I take grave exception to these charges.

Graff and Street represent a view of literacy and a view of learning and social science research in general, that has had a brief prominence, but has failed to deliver insights which are helpful and which move policy forward. I want to thank *Literacy across the Curriculum* for the opportunity to address their misunderstandings and to show why the views that motivate the concept of literacy in IALS provide a credible basis for policy and action.

The report to which Graff and Street were responding is the first of a series of reports on the survey and covered data collected from a small number of countries in 1994. Some of the criticisms they offer relate to the lack of information in that report. A technical report is now complete and is being prepared for publication; a preliminary version was made available to the participating countries last September and to those who plan to participate in a further round of data collection (and would have been made available to Graff and Street had they asked). Other reports on more specific topics are expected this year. Some of the questions the critics raise are answered in these reports. I will refer to them where appropriate.

Literacy and economic success

One of the strongest claims in IALS is that there is an important relationship between literacy skill and individual economic success.

The evidence for this lies in a number of observations in the study:

- **There is a relationship between income and literacy skill.**
  For example, in Canada IALS found that over 80% of those at the lowest literacy level had incomes below the median quintile, but just 42% of those at the highest level had incomes this low. Over a quarter of those at the highest level had incomes in the top quintile, but only 5% of those at the lowest level had incomes this high (p. 61 of the report).

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- **There is a relationship between labour force attachment and literacy.** For example, in Sweden 23% of those at the lowest literacy level were unemployed vs. just 2% among those at the highest level (p.58).

- **There is a relationship between occupational change and literacy.** For example, in Germany the average score of those working in industries showing the greatest growth was significantly higher than the average score of those working in essentially stagnant industries (p. 65).

Problems with historical perspectives

Against this, Street and Graff refer to Graff's 1979 study of literacy in mid-19th century Ontario where he found large numbers of individuals with literacy skill who had not experienced economic success. There are a number of reasons why this study, however interesting historically, is largely irrelevant to current policy.

I have never understood why researchers such as Graff and Street who argue that literacy is narrowly specific to time and place should assume that relationships between literacy and anything that held over 100 years ago should necessarily hold today. Surely, any sensible understanding of how societies change must allow for changes in the relationship between personal characteristics and life chances. Sennett and Cobb (1972), in one of the most insightful books on what ability is and how it functions in society, argue persuasively that ability (of which literacy is but one example) only began to have a significant role in occupational opportunity after (and as a consequence) of the French Revolution.

Thus, I know of no logical bar to Graff being correct about 19th century Ontario and IALS being correct about late 20th century Ontario and Canada, the United States and the other IALS countries. Bulcock and Wang (1993), using data from a previous Canadian survey of adult literacy — the Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities — also show that Graff is wrong about 1990 Canada, except for those immigrants who speak neither official language.

It seems to me that even for the 19th century, Graff only convincingly shows that half the connection is missing. By showing that there were large numbers of individuals who had literacy skills but not economic success, he has shown only that literacy is not a sufficient condition for such success. To demonstrate that it is not a necessary condition, he would also have to show that as a general condition large numbers of those who have experienced economic success do not have literacy skills. The presentation of data on this is quite clear in IALS: there are tables that show the incomes of those at different literacy skill and tables that show the literacy skills of those at different incomes.

This issue is explored further in the Canadian report where it is shown that the relationship between income and literacy is stronger in the United States and Canada than it is in Germany and the Netherlands. The labour market in the European countries is generally considered to be less flexible than that in the North American ones.[1] Under most theories of the labour market, we would expect to find a greater connection in flexible than in rigid markets, just the result that IALS found. The study makes no claim that the stronger relationship in the North American economies is more desirable. It must be pointed out, however, that many labour economists attribute some of the relatively high unemployment now found in European economies to such rigidity.

Measures of literacy

One of the problems facing Graff in his study was that he had to work with relatively crude measures of literacy, ones that were mostly 'have/don't have it' measures.

One of the advances of IALS, an advance acknowledged by these critics, is that it provides a more sophisticated measure of literacy skill. One of the strongest findings of IALS is that simply 'having it' is not a very useful measure.

Individuals who are 'literate' by any of the conventional 'literate/illiterate' definitions may nonetheless be relatively low skilled and, as such, have less access to good jobs and the high wages they offer.

This issue of relative skill differences is further explored in my *Reading, but not Reading Well* (Jones, 1993). Had Graff had a more nuanced measure of literacy to work with, he might not have been able to 'disprove the literacy myth.'

Skills and jobs

Graff claims that economists see little connection between skill and job attainment and performance. While it is undoubtedly true that one can find an economist to support almost any position, this is clearly an overstatement. The most reputable research group on labour market issues, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), has consistently shown in its work that skill (represented by education and training) is indeed important in job attainment and performance.

Much of the evidence Graff and Street cite for the lack of connection between skills and jobs comes from qualitative studies of one or two workplaces with a small number of subjects. What they don't say is that there is an equal number of qualitative studies that show skill is important to job performance and attainment. A careful, though now dated, review by Spenner (1985) concluded that neither position had been strongly supported. Thus new data, such as that from IALS, can serve to clarify the situation.

As Bailey (in press), one of the more comprehensive analysts of changes in skill and work requirements, points out,

studies of this relationship have been plagued by difficulties in measuring skill. Because IALS offers a high quality tool for measuring skill, it can help improve these studies. For example, many past studies have used educational attainment as a substitute for skill, but anyone who has been near a secondary school in this century knows that high school graduation represents a very wide range of skills. The power of a cognitive assessment such as that used in IALS is that it offers a more precise measure of skill. Hence we would expect to find stronger relationships between skill and work force characteristics using IALS than when using the education proxy, and we do.

In all, a fair reader of the changing work force literature would conclude that the evidence from the 1990s increasingly shows that good jobs require higher skills and that there are good jobs being created. The most extensive study of this issue, *The OECD Jobs Study*, certainly came to that conclusion (OECD, 1994).[2]

Graff and Street are correct that there are lots of jobs with low skill requirements being created. What they appear to believe is that there are no jobs with high skill requirements being created. They are wrong. They appear to believe that high skills are not required for good jobs. They are wrong and, worse, their advice is dangerous because it could lead policy makers to believe that investments in literacy are not important. It is interesting that neither Graff nor Street cite any labour market economists in support of their view. The only citations in Street's bibliography that refer to the changing workplace are to works written by linguists and discourse theorists.

Graff and Street are correct that there are lots of jobs with low skill requirements being created. What they appear to believe is that there are no jobs with high skill requirements being created. They are wrong. They appear to believe that high skills are not required for good jobs. They are wrong and, worse, their advice is dangerous because it could lead policy makers to believe that investments in literacy are not important.

The analysis of the economic connections in the international report is necessarily brief and, as such, only touches generally on these issues. Stephen Raudenbush and his colleagues (Fotiu, Raudenbush, et al,1995) are engaged in a more substantial analysis of the matters with the IALS data. To date their analysis has confirmed and extended the broad outlines presented in the international report. It should also be noted that Andrew Sum, in an as yet unreleased paper on the National Adult Literacy Survey in the United States, argues that the connection appears weaker when all ages are considered than when only experienced workers are analysed.

In North America, employers have little information about the skills of the young adults they hire (and seem to make scant use of the little they do have) so their hiring decisions are more likely to be based on credentials rather than skill. Once employees have been hired, however, the employer can observe, judge their skills, and reward them. Thus we would expect to find a weaker relationship when young workers are included, as they were in the IALS report. Sum also shows that once the differences in income that are due to differences in literacy are taken into consideration, the differences usually attributed to ethnicity and gender disappear or are minimized, again providing evidence that at some point skill is being directly rewarded independently of other factors. In short, one of the enduring

myths of academic literacy research is that Graff laid to rest 'the literacy myth' once and for all. He did not. Data from IALS and from other labour market research demonstrate that whatever the relationship between literacy and economic success over 100 years ago, the relationship in the 1990s is real and important.

I stress that this is an academic belief because I have met few literacy practitioners and even fewer literacy learners who believe that the 'literacy myth' has been refuted; their daily lives provide sufficient counter-evidence to Graff's claim.

Literacy and cognitive outcomes

Street offers another criticism, claiming that Scribner and Cole (1981) have demonstrated that literacy does not have cognitive consequences and that this finding invalidates the findings in IALS, although IALS makes no direct claims about the cognitive outcomes of differences in literacy skill.

This is a stronger claim about their work than Scribner and Cole themselves make. In any case, Keith Stanovich (1993) has shown that an alternative interpretation of Scriber and Cole's results is just as plausible. This interpretation is more consistent with the substantial body of evidence that literacy does have cognitive outcomes. Scribner and Cole studied the difference between individuals among the Vai, a society in Liberia, that created their own native language literacy. They found that individuals who were literate only in this Vai script did not show significant general cognitive differences from those who were not literate in any language, but that those who were literate in English - the language of education - did. Since one difference between Vai and English literacy is that the latter but not the former is taught in school, it might be argued that the cognitive consequences associated with English literacy but not with Vai are a result of schooling rather than of literacy itself. This, as I understand Street, is the claim he wants readers to accept.

Stanovich (1993), however, points out several other important differences between Vai and English literacy:

- Vai literacy is not a general literacy like English literacy, but a very restricted one, used only for personal letter writing and business communication between individuals who are familiar with each other, and thus not used for anonymous communication.

- In particular, Vai literacy does not include the essayist style that Olson (one of the leading proponents of cognitive consequences) argued was central to literacy's effect.

- Vai literacy is learned in the late teens or twenties, not as a child.

- There are no libraries or books in the Vai script and so Vai does not provide access to general world knowledge.

Notably, Scribner and Cole themselves call attention to these limitations of their own study, pointing out that "Vai script literacy does not fulfill the expectations of those social scientists who consider literacy a prime mover in social change" (p. 239). Enthusiasts such as Street seldom bother with the original authors' own qualifications of their findings and so grossly overstate the impact of those findings regarding the consequences of literacy. Since there is considerable literature, of the same high quality as Scribner and Cole's work, but without the limitations identified here, that does demonstrate cognitive consequences, Street's criticism has little relevance for assessing the quality or acceptability of IALS.

Purposes of literacy: Two views

Both Street and Graff claim that ethnographic research has shown that literacy can be used for different purposes and that, for some individuals at least, literacy is used for only some of those purposes. From this, they wish to conclude that there not only is not, but that there can not be any general literacy skill. None of the research they cite has to my knowledge shown that the cognitive processes

involved in literacy are different when used for different purposes.

Typical of such studies is Gee (1988) who speculates about the knowledge and attitudes necessary to 'read' an aspirin bottle; he never presents any empirical evidence that individual differences in the ability to do so are a function of the presumed differences in knowledge and attitude and not of differences in some general reading ability. The dispute between advocates of situated cognition (Street's and Graff's beliefs fall squarely into this camp) and those who work in the cognitive science tradition (a tradition that I believe IALS sits squarely in the middle of) have occupied research journals in education for nearly a decade. Despite what Street and Graff would have us believe, the issue is far from settled.

This is hardly the place for an extended discussion of this dispute.[3] It is important to note that Greeno, a leading theoretician of the situated learning school, accepts several positions that would seem to be inconsistent with the claims Street sets out. These are that:

- Learning need not be bound to the specific situation of its application. This is fully consistent with the large body of work in cognitive psychology which demonstrates the existence of transfer of learning.

- Knowledge can indeed transfer between different sorts of tasks.

- Abstract instruction can be very effective and one need not teach everything in concrete, almost vocational settings.

- Instruction need not take place only in complex social situations.

(Anderson, Reder, and Simon, 1997)

In short, cognitive skills are not exclusively situation-specific skills, and a broad-based approach to assessing these skills is appropriate. What we can expect is that the more secure the skills, the more successfully they will be transferred. Indeed, one way of thinking about the literacy scales in studies such as IALS is that high scores represent the most transferable level of skill while each succeeding lower level indicates greater and greater difficulty in applying the skills in new situations. I have argued (in *Reading, but not Reading Well*) that the lowest level of skill may indeed represent a non-transferable level of skill.

The specific evidence from the statistical analysis of IALS is that there is simply no general evidence of a situation effect. If previous experience were all that counted, as Street seems to say, then we would expect someone who answered one of the questions based on the bus schedule correctly to

answer the rest of the questions on the bus schedule correctly. This doesn't happen. Instead, the best predictor of whether someone can answer a particular question on the bus schedule correctly is how well they answer questions with similar cognitive demands on other, situationally unrelated texts.

But let's assume that Street and Graff are right that literacy is narrowly situationally specific. Then it would seem that IALS has managed to locate and test a situationally specific literacy that is highly related to social and economic well-being.

Street and Graff are sure to claim that we have thus privileged this one kind of literacy. But it is not the IALS researchers who have privileged it, it is society. While we might determine test

scores, we don't determine employment, income, social participation or any of the other characteristics we found associated with IALS literacy. It is not for the IALS research team to determine whether it is fair that this one kind of literacy is so valued by society. It would have been negligent of us, however, having discovered these connections not to have reported them.

Interpreting IALS task responses

Street further claims that we narrowly construed the answers we accepted, penalizing those who might bring new interpretations and insights to particular questions. The scorers probably wish that we had done so, because that would have made their tasks simpler. Instead, we reviewed novel answers and continually added new correct responses to the scoring protocol. All of the IALS tasks were in constructed response format (we used no multiple-choice questions), so we did get answers that we had not anticipated. Some of these were as good as ones we did anticipate and we accepted them and had our scorers include them in their protocols; others were as off the mark as wrong answers we anticipated and we did not accept them. We did not ask our scorers to act as Scantron machines and mark right and wrong mechanically.

The sample of tasks published in the report is less

BOX

The challenge of analysing tasks across cultures

I cannot blame Street for this misinterpretation, as we were less clear in our explanations of this than we could have been. Similarly, our analysis procedures allowed a task in one country to have different difficulty levels than in others. This happened in only a few cases and in almost all of them it was because we had not been as diligent in ensuring format congruence from language to language as we should have been. For example, one task based on a letter to the editor about cloth versus disposable diapers was considerably more difficult in the Netherlands than in other countries. This was somewhat surprising as the letter had originally appeared in a Dutch newspaper and contained information that might be considered 'Netherlands specific'; under the situational hypothesis this should have made the task easier for Dutch respondents, not more difficult. It turns out that in translating the text the original Dutch word 'five' had been changed to the numeral '5'. Since '5' stands out in a text more easily than 'five', those taking the test in other languages found it easier to locate this crucial piece of information. This is consistent with our cognitive explanation of performance on the test. Further evidence from an analysis of other country-to-country differences shows that almost all can be accounted for by such textual rather than situational differences.

representative than might be wished and this has allowed Street to criticize the narrowness of the test. [See BOX p.15] Our publishing choices, however, were limited. We could not publish all the tasks because the assessment was then in use in four other countries and we anticipated that it would be used with a third group as well. To have released the test as a whole would have jeopardized the results in those studies. We thought that not publishing any examples would also be a disservice, as it might then be difficult for readers to understand how the test tasks were constructed. For the moment (actually for quite a long time as the schedule for use of the test now extends into the next century), readers will simply have to accept that we used a broad range of items from a great variety of contexts, topics, situations and difficulties.

Although no more tasks will be published in the technical report soon to be released, a more complete description of the task pool will be available there. Survey respondents who scored high did so because they had skills that allowed them to deal with tasks across that range represented on the test: on different topics, from different contexts, in different situations, and at different levels of difficulty. Those who scored lower had skills that were more restricted. What else could differences in skill mean?

Literacy and equity

What I agree on with Street and Graff is that access to high literacy skills has not been, and is not now, equitably distributed in society. I do not see, however, what this has to do with whether or not differences in literacy skill matter. Graff seems to believe that because differences in literacy are more closely tied to differences in social class and opportunity than to economic success, this disproves any connection between literacy and economic success. I have no trouble understanding that parents' social-economic status has an influence on the opportunity to acquire skills and that skills thus acquired or not acquired have an effect on economic well-being. Path analyses of this kind are now the stock in trade of social science research.

It is important to understand, however, that the connection between parental circumstances and child's literacy as an adult is an empirical issue. Doug Willms, working with the IALS Canadian data, presents strong evidence in a paper soon to be released in the IALS monograph series that the connection varies considerably from province to province with some showing little or no effect and others showing marked effect. In all, however, there is a connection between literacy and involvement in the economy.

The criticisms of Graff and Street are not new. They are, however, inaccurate. We ask readers to judge IALS on what it says about the importance of literacy to all adults. Literacy ability <u>is</u> a factor in work force participation, it <u>is</u> a factor in social participation. IALS shows this to be the case.

In many ways the IALS message is not new to the literacy field. Anyone who has worked with learners understands that this message is not new to them. It does appear to be new to the people who decide whether there should be funding for literacy programs. The message from the literacy research community in Canada that literacy didn't matter, the same message Street and Graff want us to believe, had nearly succeeded in convincing governments that investments in adult literacy were not worthwhile. The message from the literacy practitioner community, especially those in the work force literacy and in the basic skills training communities, had been different. We like to think that the support for that message in IALS helped convince those who determine government spending that investments in literacy are worthwhile. It may be just *hubris* on our part, but those of us who worked on IALS in Canada do draw a connection between the release of our Canadian report in September 1996 and the increased funding for the National

Literacy Secretariat, especially for workplace literacy, in the federal budget in February 1997. As well, literacy workers in several provinces have told us that the international report was instrumental in preservng or increasing funding for literacy.

Hopefully, IALS has ended another 'literacy myth,' the myth that literacy doesn't matter.

Notes

[1] See Freeman(1994)for an accessible discussion of comparative labour market rigidity and its consequences.

[2] Those who want a comprehensive review of the literature on skills and jobs will find Harry O'Neil's Workforce readiness: Competencies and assessment (in press) an important source.

[3] Readers interested in pursuing the matter will find that the exchange in Anderson, Reder and Simon (1996), Greeno (1997), and Anderson, Reder and Simon (1997) provides the most recent discussion of the two positions.

Stan Jones *is a professor in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Carleton University. His primary work in literacy has been in assessment as creator of the Ontario Test of Adult Functional Literacy (1985), and as primary consultant on Statistics Canada's 1989-90 Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities and on the current International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). He has also worked extensively in English Second Language devising the process used by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to develop national benchmarks and a new assessment tool. In the mid-1980s, he was Acting Director of the University of Michigan International ESL Testing Program.*

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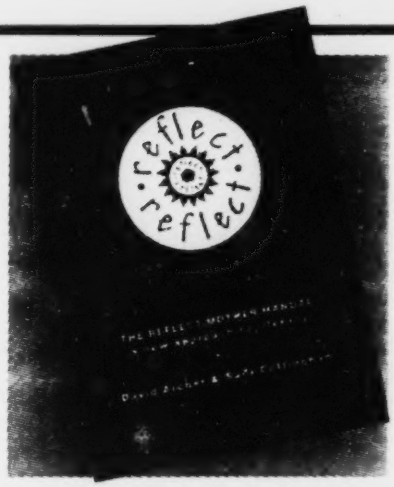
Literacy in Circles?

by Marc Fiedrich.
Working Paper No.2.
ACTIONAID, London, UK.
December 1996. 39 pp.
ISBN: 1 872502 41 5

A recent book on foreign aid and international charity entitled *The Road to Hell* took an uneven look at the unintended effects of humanitarian intervention in developing countries. Author Michael Maren focused mainly on the negative outcomes of much foreign aid including creating dependencies, discouraging local initiatives and destroying communities and cultures.

Critiques of aid agencies are usually launched from outside. So it was heartening to recently receive a copy of *Literacy in Circles?* a working paper commissioned by ACTIONAID, a large British aid agency known for its work in education and participatory development. Marc Fiedrich was invited by the agency to write a critical evaluation of one of its REFLECT pilot project in Bundibugyo Uganda. REFLECT is an elaborate system of teaching that integrates literacy into development work and builds on local knowledge which is constructed in learning circles. Hence the title of this report. [See *LAC*, Vol.12 No 1 for a fuller discussion of REFLECT.]

The agency was concerned about the possible distortion of its work, especially around the issues of empowerment and participation, as the



approach has spread rapidly to more than 25 countries. "The best means of preventing distortion" they argue, "is to encourage critical debate, serious evaluation and creative reflection."

Literacy in Circles? calls into question many of the premises on which the project was based and portrays many inadvertent outcomes, some of them related to those addressed in the Maren book.

Among the findings are evidence that rates of mother tongue literacy are increasing in Bundibugyo where there was no written culture before. But creating a literate environment to sustain the growth has been difficult because the presence of libraries and notions of community newsletters are not part of the native culture.

The writer suggests that a more balanced approach would be to ask what use of literacy learners want to make but cannot achieve without institutional support.

There are problems in sustaining local literacy because there are many mother tongues and officials tend not to use those of particular villages. Further, the classes have created a new demand for learning English which is the language of the agency and of the many foreign visitors who have come to observe Bundibugyo since the program began. Many villagers now believe that knowing English will put them in more direct contact with potential funders and power brokers.

But teaching a dominant language is contrary to the philosophy of the agency as well as not feasible because facilitators are hired locally. There is also some concern about the motivation of facilitators. The exchange of aid money has taken it outside the realm of locally motivated development.

Finally, the very concept of partnership with rural communities, on which REFLECT is based, is called into question. Fiedrich argues that it is impractical because:

> rural society rarely consists of homogenous village units who pursue common goals. The "trust" that aid agencies invest into imagined communities by handing over, for example, the monitoring of literacy facilitators, can be misplaced. Wherever communities are little else but administrative boundaries individuals cannot be expected to pursue anything but their personal or group interests. [Summary, p.1]

He also recognizes the dilemma for aid agencies who use the "partnership with community concept" to support their own "supposedly political neutral status."

This report is remarkable for its honesty and rigourous analysis. It might serve as compulsory reading for a course on the politics of literacy because it illuminates many issues that affect programs in the industrialized world as well.
[See In the Classroom, p. 4]

ACTIONAID is to be commended for both commissioning and publishing this report.. The one quibble is the number of surface errors left in the text. They distract from an otherwise strong piece of work and rankle in a report on literacy. [LS]

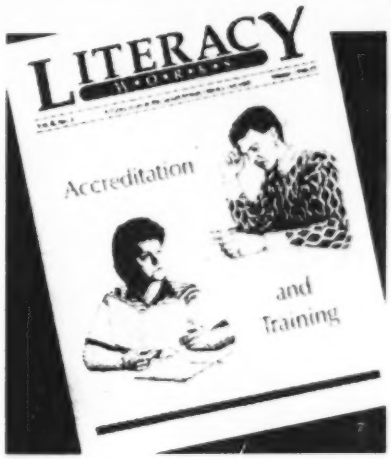
Literacy in Circles?
can be ordered for £2.50 from ACTIONAID, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, Archway, London N19 5PG UK.
Tel: 011-44-171-281-4101;
Fax: 011-44-171-272-0899;
E-mail:antonell@actionaid.org.uk
Ask about postage and handling charges before ordering.

Accreditation & training for literacy

An overview of accreditation and training programs for literacy practitioners in several Canadian provinces appears in the Winter 1996-97 issue of LITERACY WORKS put out by the Saskatchewan Literacy Network. They include British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Northern Ontario and Nova Scotia, reflecting the diversity of practice and provision across the country.

Some of the programs are formal provincial initiatives, others are locally developed. They vary in purpose, intensity and depth, and therefore are not easy to compare. The only common thread in the programs described is a conviction that *all* literacy practitioners — instructors, tutors, coordinators — require a higher level of certified training than has been the norm in the past.

This claim is not universally accepted. It is seen in some quarters as a threat to the volunteer movement. Robin Millar's description of the program developed by the Manitoba Adult Literacy Basic



Skills Unit confronts this issue openly. She sketches in what she calls the early history of adult literacy work when educators believed that a good adult education approach and a positive environment were enough to ensure learning, and that anyone who could read could teach someone else to read. Manitoba, she says, recognized that this "well-meaning but unprofessional" approach was inadequate.

> Adult learners were not just people with problems who needed reading instruction. They were people who often had a combination of social, economic, and linguistic disadvantages plus a history of failure experiences in school. Literacy workers with no in-depth training or experience were expected to meet those learners' complex educational needs. We felt this was unfair both to the literacy workers and the learners. (p.10)

Manitoba developed a series of exemplary courses towards three levels of certification. However, the complexity of trying to enforce accreditation is indirectly underlined when Millar acknowledges that only the Introductory course is required and only paid instructors must take it. Volunteers are "encouraged" but each individual program conducts its own orientation and selects volunteers. So the original problem remains only partially addressed.

The entire issue of LITERACY WORKS gives thumbnail sketches of various models and contact information for anyone who wants more. It has opened up a vital question about the professionalization of literacy work; some of the most telling information lies between the lines. [LS]

To order LITERACY WORKS, Volume 8, No2, send $8 (includes tax) to Saskatchewan Literacy Network, PO, Box 1520, Saskatoon SK, Canada, S7K 3R5. Tel: (306) 653-7368; Fax: (306) 933-6490; E-mail: sklit@sk.sympatico.ca

Chronological Conference Listing

Local

SPRINGBOARDS '97
Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) & Quebec Reading Association (QRA)
April 18 -19, 1997
Longueuil, QC
Information: Linda Allen.
Tel: (819) 563-0770; Fax: (819) 820-0500

Quebec Library Association (ABQLA)
65th Annual Conference
May 1 - 3, 1997
Montreal, QC
Information: QLA, Mary Ciampini, 37 Bethune, Kirkland, QC, H9H 4L5, Tel: (514) 630-4876

9th Colloquium of the Association of College Research (ARC)
"Constructing Knowledge: The Contribution of College Researchers"
May 21 - 23, 1997
Dawson College
Montreal, QC
Information: ARC, Collège André-Grasset, 1001, Crémazie Blvd. E., Montreal, QC, H2M 1M3.
Tel: (514) 389-5348; Fax: (514) 381-7421; E-mail: arc@odyssee.net

2nd National Forum on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR '97)
October 6 - 8, 1997
Montreal, QC
Information: Tel: (613) 233-5179;
Fax: (613) 233-4766;
E-mail: clfdb@magi.com

National/International

6th Annual Conference on Family Literacy
April 20 - 22, 1997
Louisville KY
Information: National Center for Literacy, Department C, Waterfront Plaza, 325 W. Main Street, #22, Louisville, KY, 40202-4251.
Tel: (502) 584-1133.

Second Annual Workplace Learning Conference
April 27 - 29, 1997
Milwaukee, WI
Information: Tel: 1-800 446-0399;
Website: http://www.cew.wisc.edu

Conference Board of Canada Reaching for Success: Business & Education Working Together
May 4 - 6, 1997
(Training sessions, May 2)
Calgary, AB
Information: Dina Derenzis, Conference Board of Canada, 255 Smyth Road, Ottawa, ON, K1H 8M7, Canada.
Tel: (613) 526-4249 or 1 800-267-0666;
Fax (613) 521-0661; E-mail:
registrar@conferenceboard.ca

International Reading Association
42nd Annual Convention
May 4 - 7, 1997
Atlanta, GA
Information: IRA, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE, USA 19714-8139, Tel: (302) 731-1600, ext 226;
Fax: (302) 731-1057.

Multimedia in Education at MULTIMEDIA '97
May 7 - 9, 1997
Toronto, ON
Information: Multimedia Trade Shows Inc., 7-70 Villarboit Crescent, Concord, ON, L4K 4C7,Tel: (905) 660-2491;
Fax: (905) 660-2492; Website:
http://www.multimedia.ca

Laubach Literacy Canada 9th Biennial Conference
May 22 - 25, 1997
Winnipeg, MN
Information: Karen Boskamp, Transcona Literacy Centre, Tel: (204) 224-9099;
Fax: (204) 222-4998

Commission on Adult Basic Education '97(COABE)
May 28 - 31, 1997
Detroit, MI
Information: (810) 340-6841

Learned Societies
Theme: "Communications"
May 31 - June 14, 1997
Memorial University, NF
Information: Tel: (709) 737-4360;
Fax: (709) 737-4449; E-mail:
learneds@morgan.ucs.mun.ca

The 13th Computers and Writing Conference
Kapi'olani Community College, University of Hawaii
June 5 - 9, 1997
Honolulu, Hawaii
Information: Computers and Writing Conference 1997, Arts and Science Department, Kapi'olani Community College, 4303 Diamond Head Road, Honolulu, HI 96816,
E-mail:cw97@lahi.kcc.hawaii.edu

World Conference on Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia & World Conference on Educational Telecommunications
June 14 - 19, 1997
Calgary AB
Information: AACE@virginia.edu
http://aace.virginia.edu/aace/

Canadian Library Association
June 18 - 22, 1997
Ottawa, ON
Information: CLA, 200 Elgin Street, # 602, Ottawa, ON K2P 1L5,
Tel: (613) 232-9625;
Fax: (613) 563-9895

Australia Literacy Educators Association, Australia Association for the Teaching of English & Australia School Library Association Conference
"Language, Learning and Culture: Unsettling Certainties"
July 8 - 11, 1997
Darwin, Australia
Information: Conerence Convenors, darwin "97 Conerence, PO Box 42403, Casuarina, Northern Territory 0811, Australia. tel: +61-08-8922-0725;
Fax: +61-08-8922-0789;
E-mail: darwin97@oze-mail.com.au

UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education
"Adult Education: A Key for the Twenty-First Century"
July 14 - 18, 1997
Hamburg Germany
Information: UNESCO Institute for Education, Feldbrunnenstrasse 58, 20148 Hamburg, Germany,
Tel: (+49 40) 44 80 41-0; Fax: (+49 40) 410 77 23; E-mail: uie@unesco.org

Whole Language Umbrella '97
"Literate Lives, Literate Futures"
July 24 - 27, 2997
Seattle/Bellevue, WA
Information:

10th European Conference on Reading
"Literacy, A Human Right: Bringing Cultures Closer"
August 3 - 5, 1997
Brussels, Belgium
Information: Albert De Smedt, Conference Secretariat, Mechelsbroekstraat 9, B-2820, Bonheiden, Belgium.

Tenth Annual Adult Literacy and Technology (ALT) 1997
August 3 - 5, 1997
Boise ID
Information: Richard Sparks, Chair General Education, School of Applied Technology, Idaho State University, Box 8380, Pocatello, Idaho 83209,
Fax: (208) 236-4641, Tel: (208) 236-2468; e-mail: Sparrich@fs.isu.edu

17th International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform
August 3 - 6, 1997
Rohnert Park, CA
Information: Center for Critical Thinking, Sonoma State University, 1801 E. Cotati Avenue, Rohnert Park, CA., Tel: (707) 664-2940;
Fax: (707) 664-4101

Association for Continuing Higher Education CHE '97
"Changing the Rules: Access & Accessibility in an Information Age"
October 25 - 28, 1997
Penn State University
Information: Laurie Greenwood, Regents College, 7 Columbia Circle, Albany NY 12203, tel: (518) 464-8770

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW '97)
November 7 - 9, 1997
Fredericton, NB
Information: CRIAW Program Committee, 519 Beaverbrook Crt., Fredericton, NB, E3B 1X6, Canada.
Tel:(506) 450-2632; Fax: (506) 451-8389; E-mail:
criaw97@brunswickmicro.nb.ca

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
November 9 - 12, 1997
Cincinnati, OH
Information: Liza McFadden, AAACE Program Chair, 1200 19th Street, NW, #300, Washington, DC 20036-2422,
Tel: (202) 429-5131;
Fax: (202) 223-4579

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
November 20 - 23, 1997
Detroit, MI
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana , IL 61801-1096,
Tel: (217) 328-3870, ext. 251.

Modern Language Association (MLA)
December 27 - 30, 1997
Toronto, ON
Information: MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 1003-6981

1998 CCCC Winter Workshop
January 7 - 9, 1998
Clearwater Beach, FL
Information: 1-800-369-6283, ext. 251 to request brochure

International Reading Association (IRA)
World Congress
July 21 - 24, 1998
Oho Rio, Jamaica
Information: IRA, 800 Barks dale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139,
Tel: (302) 731-1600 or 800-336-READ.

The Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking
1996-97 series of workshops and conferences. Topics include: Writing to Learn, Writing and Thinking, Writing to Learn Math and Science, Teaching Women's Writing, Arguing Differently, and more...
Information: Bard College, PO. Box 5000, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, USA 12504-5000, Tel: (914) 758-7484.

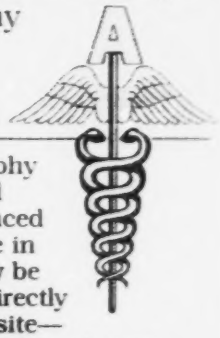
Summer Institutes
NCTE College Section
Summer Institute
"Technology and the Teaching of Literature"
June 1 - 4, 1997
Myrtle Beach, SC
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096

Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms
With Dr. Cynthia Selfe and Dr. Gail Hawisher
June 16 - 27, 1997
Michigan Technological University
Houghton, MI
Information: Keri Lenz or Gretchen Janssen, Office of Conferences and Institutes, Michigan Technological University, 1400 Townsend Drive, Houghton, MI 49931-1295,
Tel: (906) 487-2263;Fax: (906) 487-3101; E-mail: klenz@mtu.edu or gjanssen@mtu.edu

Martha's Vineyard Summer Workshops
1997 Institute on Writing and Teaching
June 30 - July 14, 1997
July 16 - 29, 1997
Information: Department of English, 406 Holmes Hall, Boston, MA 02115,
Tel: (617) 373-3637,
E-mail:
BMALLAGH@LYNX.NEU.EDU
HTTP://WWW.CASDN.NEU.EDU/-ENGLISH/INDEX.HTM

Health & Literacy

bibliography NOW available on the web



The bibliography on health and literacy produced by The Centre in 1995 can now be downloaded directly from our website—http://www.nald.ca.litcent.htm

Bound copies can still be ordered for $5 from The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal QC, Canada, H3Z 1A4. Make cheques payable to The Centre for Literacy.

Call for Proposals

Tenth Annual Adult Literacy and Technology (ALT) 1997

August 3 - 5, 1997
Boise ID

Proposals are invited in the following strands:

- Libraries, Resources and Standards for technology
- Administrative Use, Staff Development, Intake and Testing
- Legal and Future Issues in Technology
- Effective Use in Teaching and Learning
- Technology Design

Proposals may be submitted by fax, mail or e-mail. The form can be accessed through the NIFL Workplace List c/o moderator Barb Van Horn: BLV1@PSU.EDU or by contacting Richard Sparks, Chair General Education, School of Applied Technology, Idaho State University, Box 8380, Pocatello, Idaho 83209, Fax: (208) 236-4641, tel: (208) 236-2468; e-mail: Sparrich@fs.isu.edu

NCTE announces conference in Montreal:

- What do we mean when we talk about a reflective classroom, a reflective student and a reflective teacher?
- What practices foster reflection? How do we know that these practices are productive, and what do we mean by productive?
- What challenges do we face when we introduce reflection and how might we overcome them? Are there other challenges that characterize long-term efforts at reflective learning and teaching and how might we accommodate those?

Expanding the Conversation on Reflection: Innovative Practices, New Understandings, Current Challenges

a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference for educators from all levels K - College

June 26 - 28, 1997

co-sponsored by The Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) & The Centre for Literacy

Information: NCTE Professional Development Services, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL61801-1096, Tel: 1-800-369-6283 or (217) 328-0977; E-mail: pds@ncte.org

LITERACY & TECHNOLOGY

June 24 - 26, 1997

Who will be at the 1997 Summer Institute on Literacy & Technology?

Tina Detheridge, UK developer of WIDGIT software and co-author of *Literacy Through Symbols: Access to Learning for Children and Adults* (Summer 1997)

- Institute question: Can software built around images of words help people who have difficulty with language processing learn to "read"?

Tina Detheridge has developed a series of software products using symbols designed to help children and adults with learning difficulties who cannot master traditional text. Researchers at the National Council for Educational Technology (NCET) recommend WIDGIT materials highly.

Now Tina and her husband have written a practical book for teachers and other users of their materials providing ideas, examples and theoretical background on the use of symbols. Samples of WIDGIT software can be previewed on their website: http://www.widgit.com/

Information:
Tel: (514) 931-8731, ext 1415.
Fax: (514) 931-5181. E-mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
Website: http://nald.ca.litcent.htm

The New Reading Disc now available in Canada

Information:
Beth Wall,
The Centre for Literacy,
(514) 931- 8731, local 1415;
Fax: (514) 931-5181;
http://www.nald.ca.litcent.htm.

Gimme Shelter!:

Literacy and Homelessness Work in Canada

- Is there homelessness in your community?
- Does your literacy program work with learners who are homeless?
- Do you do outreach to emergency shelters, food banks, drop-ins, or "soup kitchens" in your community?
- Do people who are transient spend time in your program or in the local library?
- Are you concerned and interested, but not sure how literacy relates to life on the street?

For several years, the Literacy and Homelessness Project at the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program in Toronto has worked to make literacy and education accessible and relevant to people who are homeless, transient, or socially isolated.

The program has facilitated literacy work using a community development model in a drop-in program for people who are homeless; it has helped to form the Toronto Street Education Coalition, a group of literacy and drop-in/shelter workers; it has provided literacy & homelessness tutor training workshops for staff in drop-ins, shelters, and health centres; and it has researched and produced two books about literacy and homelessness.

Now, the Literacy and Homelessness Project has been funded by the National Literacy Secretariat to research programs across Canada that are doing or would like to do literacy and homelessness work. The Project is also hosting an internet conference for programs to talk nationally about the work that they are doing in their communities and the challenges they face.

If your program is doing or would like to do this work, or if you know of programs that are doing this work, please contact Betsy Trumpener, The Literacy and Homelessness Project, St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 248 Ossington Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6H 3A2. Tel: (416) 539-9000 (Call collect, if necessary); Fax: (416) 532-8739; E-mail: btrump@ican.net

N.B. *Literacy and Homelessness: Delivering Literacy in an Adult Drop-In Program* is available for $12 from the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program. *Gimme Shelter! A Resource for Literacy and Homelessness Work* will soon be available through the NALD web site.

Call for submissions from the field to

CONNECT

A New National Newsletter on Technology in Adult Literacy
First issue in March 1997

This publication will report on the ways technology is currently being used in literacy programs, promote the appropriate use of technology in these programs and offer information on the use of technology in curriculum.

CONNECT will include reports from the field, reports from learners, lesson plans, ideas and software reviews as well as feature articles.

CONNECT will be available for $5/year for 5 issues in hard copy, OR it can be viewed and downloaded at no cost from the National Adult Literacy Database NALD (http://www.nald.ca) or from Alphacom.

CONNECT has been funded by the National Literacy Secretariat and the Literacy Section of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training.

To submit articles or request information: Pauline McNaughton, Editor, CONNECT, Continuing Education Centre, Ottawa Board of Education, 515 Cambridge Street, S. Ottawa, ON K1S 4H9. Tel: (613) 239-2656; Fax: (613) 239-2429; AlphaCom: plarabee
E-mail: pmcnaugh@obe.edu.on.ca

June 24 - 26, 1997

Who will be at the 1997 Summer Institute on Literacy and Technology?

***Frances Graham*, Director of WORKBASE Training UK**
With support from

The British Council

• Institute Question: How are learning technologies currently being used in workplace settings to improve adult basic skills? How widely used are they in Canada, the US, and the UK for reaching those at the lowest end of the education spectrum?

WORKBASE is a national not-for-profit UK organization dedicated to the training and development of non-managerial employees, with a primary focus on basic skills.

Originally funded by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit for 10 years, Workbase has been independent since 1990 supported by the Confederation of British Industry, the Local Government Management Board, the Trades Union Congress and other unions.

WORKBASE has pioneered a flexible and open access approach to reduce barriers to learning such as shift work or problems of releasing staff. They have also developed the WORKBASE TOOLKIT designed for managers and human resources staff to introduce a strategy for staff training and development.

WORKBASE has been working closely with several software developers in recent years to adapt and create products that reflect their philosophy and methodology. Frances Graham will present these initiatives and comment on the issues WORKBASE has confronted around integrating technology into basic skills training.

To subscribe, complete this form and mail it with your cheque to:
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is published four times during the academic year by The Centre for Literacy

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VOL 6 No. 4 • 1997

Media Focus

THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY

The morphing of media literacy

by Pierre C. Bélanger, Ph.D.
University of Ottawa

New tools — new definitions

Despite all the hope, tribulations, research and development that have gone into media literacy programs in Canada over the past 20 years, the results could not be bleaker: they simply have not taken off.

If we exclude the pioneering work that made Ontario the model, very few provinces have made the study of the "grammar" of the media mandatory within an educational curriculum. The current enthusiasm and sense of urgency surrounding the acquisition of computer skills and related competence are forcing a reconsideration of both the place and the nature of what used to be the exclusive domain of media literacy.

The prevalent messianic discourse in our schools today is largely dominated by the necessity to master the much heralded new learning tools, i.e. those very computers and software that make up the cornerstones of the digital economy. A direct corollary of the assumption conceives of the schools as the chief providers of the required human capital, more poetically referred to as the knowledge workers of the information society.

The fascination exerted by the digital revolution has evolved into a virtual beacon that orients much of today's political decision-making.

One cannot negate the salience of new information and communication technologies in the day-to-day business of modern society. Their benefits are said to be numerous, even though their consequences stir up much controversy if we are to believe authors such as Postman, Rifkin, Stoll and others. One also cannot deny that the current technological bandwagon has induced a numbing effect on our collective minds creating a powerful euphoria around the Information Highway. The fascination exerted by the digital revolution has evolved into a virtual beacon that orients much of today's political decision-making.

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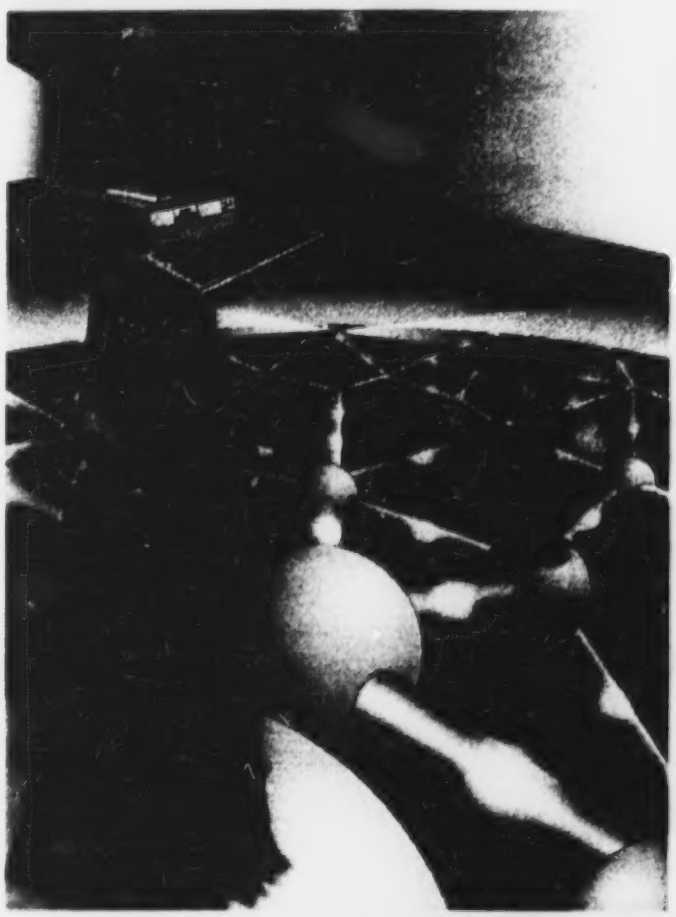

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Media Focus

is a supplement to **Literacy Across the Curriculum** published 4 times a year by

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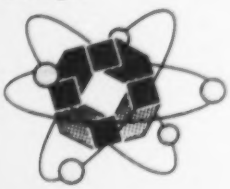
The Centre for Literacy - Le centre d'alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada, and Dawson College.



Literacy for the 21st century

Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In this context, the techno-skeptics appear to be fighting an uphill battle against the techno-topists to not only slow the pace at which new technologies are being integrated into just about every aspect of modern life, but equally important, to examine and reflect upon our growing reliance on communication networks and electronic material for educational purposes.

There will always be pundits who find solace in the fact that most Ministries of Education in Canada today formally include the "study of the media" in the learning objectives of the official curriculum. What these commentators fail to recognize, though, is the highly evasive nature of the practices used to attain those objectives. Even more perplexing is the oft-times optional and discretionary aspect of those pedagogical guidelines.

Many advocates of media literacy programs contend that the curriculum elements dealing with media education are far too general and subjective to provide adequate training in helping students become more critical, discriminant, mature and selective in their rapport with the various media that touch their everyday lives.

Teacher training still lacking

Although Professor Winston Emery from McGill's Department of Educational Studies might disagree, (see p.4), teacher training programs in most Canadian universities today are barely contributing to counter this criticism. With a few exceptions, professional development programs are primarily designed to prepare the budding teacher to survive in an increasingly demanding environment.

Despite the lasting benefits of a three-credit course on Technological Resources as Teaching Aids in the Classroom, such a course is a far cry from what proponents of media literacy have been demanding for years. The compounding effect of a lack of proper teacher training and of a loosely defined media education curriculum does very little to increase the profile and prominence of this field of study at a time when the New World has adopted technology as its main currency and newest lingua franca.

In our desire to avoid creating a generation of couch potatoes subject to the power and consumerist values of television, we now must guard ourselves from falling victims to our own trap of technological frenzy and producing a generation of mouse potatoes.

An insidious shift

In such a context, the insidious semantic shift that we are witnessing today is a natural outcome of teacher-guided exercises on the deconstruction and analysis of media content being replaced by surfing sessions on the Web. The pressure to answer the call of the emerging Information Society is having a far more profound impact on the curriculum of our schools than many are willing to admit.

Let us not forget that our schools and the technologies with which we wish to equip them fit into different intellectual frameworks.

On the one hand, the traditional school is based on the premise that scarcity of information calls for strategies designed to facilitate information management in a learning environment largely determined by both time and a fixed locale.

Conversely, new information and communication technologies operate from the assumptions that there is an abundance of information readily available "out there" and that the user can have direct and autonomous access to a plethora of information sources while being liberated from temporal and spatial constraints. Such an information-rich environment is in the process of significantly altering the way one views the education system and its prime function in society.

The morphing of teachers

It is in this "account-ability" context that traditional media literacy programs are systematically being morphed into task-oriented computer-training laboratories. There is no question that computer skills are fundamental requirements for a great many positions in today's economy, and in that regard, their integration in the schools is very justified. The education system would be remiss if it did not provide basic training in what has become one of the key artifacts of our era. The point of contention, however, has to do rather with the cognitive and perceptual ramifications that they engender and our generally limited assessment of their nature and consequences.

For anyone accustomed to navigation on the Web, it is common knowledge that this form of electronic search and retrieval of information favours not only a predominantly individualistic approach to learning, but also one that may take the learner on tangents not initially planned in the original assignment. What becomes problematic, and might discourage some teachers from making regular use of electronic sources of exploration, is a sense of losing control over what is being learned.

This fact is far from being a defining trait only of contemporary education. Many corporations and professional services organizations are experiencing this "intelligent loss of control" that challenges them to find productive ways to manage efficiently in an unplanned environment brought about by a host of electronic sources and systems of information. Within the educational domain, this significant paradigm shift from a teaching to a learning environment should impose an equally progressive change in the way we train our teachers.

> In such a pursuit, an analytical and critical examination of technology's role, functions and consequences for our society must be as pressing as knowing how to operate it.

What price interactivity?

The new imperatives that drive today's education system have succeeded in reifying the ill-defined concept of interactivity. It is as if establishing a connection with an electronic penpal in Kuala Lumpur, using two-way video computer communication or accessing a flamboyant Web site had become the ultimate learning experiences.

Granted, once again, that such multimedia technologies are impressive information and communication tools. We must nonetheless find ways and time across the curriculum to reflect upon the impact that such learning strategies leave on the mind of the users.

In our desire to avoid creating a generation of couch potatoes subject to the power and consumerist values of television, we now must guard ourselves from falling victims to our own trap of technological frenzy and producing a generation of mouse potatoes.

As with any technological innovation, to adopt irrevocably forces some degree of adaptation. The substantial gains made possible by new technologies in the areas of production, transmission, accumulation and exchange of information must be complemented by an equally proficient learning framework. This framework must stress an active and thoughtful involvement of the user in combining the information collected as well as in its extension, interpretation and construction for subsequent uses.

In that sense, one can only hope that the current morphing of media literacy principles into computer-based techniques and skills will maintain some of the original genes that fostered the growth and development of programs whose principal aim was the study of media texts and forms in order to expand comprehension of the world around us and to generate new knowledge and new perspectives.

Rather than blindly following in technology's wake, the school still finds itself in the privileged position of not having to guess what the future will be, but rather, of preparing future generations to play an active role in what it ought to be. In such a pursuit, an analytical and critical examination of technology's role, functions and consequences for our society must be as pressing as knowing how to operate it.

Pierre C. Bélanger is associate professor in the Communication Department at the University of Ottawa. He is involved in teacher training in Ontario, Manitoba and B.C. He has acted as chief consultant in the production of two series on Media and Technological Literacies for "La télévision français de l'Ontario (TFO)" educational network. He is a regular commentator on new technologies and telecommunications policies on Radio Canada's radio and television.

Coming: New format

This is the last issue in which *Media Focus* will be a supplement.

LAC has always been committed to a broad based view of literacy which includes media and technology. As the boundaries between these fields become increasingly transparent, it seems artificial to maintain a separation between contents that overlap frequently.

Beginning with Volume 13, the title of the newsletter will be *Literacy Across the Curriculum & Media Focus*. Articles about media will be designated but integrated into the single 28-page newsletter. Judy Brandeis remains media editor.

Who will train the teachers?

Media education and teacher education — Notes from McGill —

Dr. Winston Emery, McGill University

One concern raised consistently at conferences and in publications is the lack of courses and programs in teacher training institutions to prepare teachers in Media Education. Over the past few years, at the McGill University Faculty of Education, we have been developing a new teacher education program and new courses which address this gap.

To summarize, we have incorporated two courses into our Certificate of Educational Technology (for certified teachers) on media literacy, one of which will be offered by distance education for the first time this summer. Our graduate education program in Educational Studies now has a media literacy focus in the Literacy Studies Masters of Education program. In our initial teacher education programs there is a compulsory media, technology and education component and an optional, more in-depth, elective course in media literacy education for student-teachers who wish to follow up on the media literacy component of the required course. Finally, pre-service student teachers may take some of the Ed. Tech certificate courses as electives in their programs.

In this issue and the next of *Media Focus*, I will describe the Media, Technology and Education course, which my colleague John Gradwell and I developed and taught for the first time last fall. This course is required of almost all pre-service student teachers who intend to teach at the elementary or secondary level. It was developed in collaboration with media teachers in elementary and secondary schools in the Montreal region and is intended to teach "about media" (Barry Duncan's distinctions) in their classrooms. In it we have tried to represent both the content and pedagogy of media education as we understand it.

The team of teachers and Faculty of Education professors developed a summary statement about the course [see BOX 1].

To accomplish the intentions stated, we designed a course with the following components:

1.Operations of equipment and systems:
- physical operation of copiers, projectors, audio and video recorders and players and cameras
- troubleshooting, including anticipating and correcting problems encountered
- understanding operating procedures for computers, including the use of software for word processing, database, spreadsheets and graphics; and using CD-ROM and the internet
- integrating the above equipment for multimedia purposes

2.Media literacy theory and practice:
- analysis and production of media texts

3.Designing and planning: Using knowledge acquired in 1 & 2, students will design practical ways to improve learning in a multimedia or virtual environment:
- focus on student-centered pedagogy
- designing for a collaborative learning environment

4.Technology education - Problem solving: Providing opportunities for students to investigate how society influences technology and vice versa, so that they may consider the wise use of technology in education:
- developing the technological skill of communicating, problem-solving, designing and making
- using the above skills to identify a need which require a technological solution and creating a prototype
- reading critiques of technology and discussing issues of technological determinism

BOX 1

SUB-COMMITTEE PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Course Description:

Orientation to the equipment and systems of Educational Technology. Examination of theories of educational technology, media education and technology education and the exploration and development of applications in educational settings.

The principal aim of this component is to foster in the student teacher a confident attitude towards the use of technology. The course should encourage the teachers to consider becoming agents of change: i.e. more student-centered, having more than one activity going on in the classroom at a time, having students use technology or analyze its effects, and allowing students to use media to explore and represent their own learning. An outcome of this course ought to be that student teachers understand that their students' expertise in the use of technology may be more sophisticated than their own; that this need not be a threat to their authority and that they can capitalize on this expertise and interest to the educational benefit of everyone.

The students receive the following outline:

Course outline

OVERVIEW

Following are the abilities a committee of teachers, school administrators and Faculty of Education professors determined a beginning teacher should have in order to enter the modern classroom. They form the minimum requirements of this course.

Use equipment, including basic troubleshooting, and present software

- Overhead projectors, including conventional acetate and LCD projection
- Audio cassette recorder
- VCR and camera
- 35mm camera (slides, photos - conventional and digital)
- Computer: combination word processing, draw, spreadsheet (Clarisworks)
- E-mail
- CD-ROM
- Internet

Demonstrate a critical* stance towards the media and the messages they transmit

- Produce (write) a media text
- Critique (read) a media/popular culture text in depth, using a Media Literacy Critical framework

* *critical means having an understanding of how media messages are produced and distributed and have positive and negative dimensions.*

Demonstrate a knowledge about technology and its process, and some of the issues related to its use in education

- Generate a theoretical argument for appropriate use of technology in education. Explore positive and negative consequences of its implementation: its strengths and weaknesses: what it can and should be used for; what it cannot or should not be used for.
- Construct a solution to a technological problem.

We expect that with the knowledge and attitudes developed in this course you will be able to design lessons or units of instruction for the development of students' media literacy and ability to understand, use and apply technology wisely.

ASSIGNMENTS

Given the above requirements, we have devised a series of assignments for this course which all students **must** complete. The assignments are in the form of a checklist showing what you are able to do (and how well you are able to do it). The master check list is appended to this course proposal. It may be amended as a result of our discussion about it. Keep a copy of it and fill it in as you master each of the abilities. Some of you may already be able to do many of the things on the list. We expect that your assignments will include teaching your colleagues what you know.

Basically, there are three kinds of assignments:

- those which enable you to learn to use/operate/troubleshoot equipment and/or software;
- those which get you to consider why you are using and teaching about media and technology;
- those which give you an opportunity to envision what you might do in the classroom.

Please note that we do not expect you to be fully competent in media and technology as a result of taking this course. Many of the processes and techniques you encounter can be studied in considerably greater depth than is possible in the time we have. We do hope you emerge from this course with the ability and confidence to begin to explore on your own and with your students the possibilities modern technology offers to education, and to do it with some wisdom.

TEXTBOOK:

Heide, A. and Henderson, D. (1994). *The Technological Classroom: A Blueprint for Success*. Toronto: Trifolium Books/Irwin. Price $23.96.

We have chosen this book for several reasons. It is written by and for teachers, encouraging them to begin to use technology in the classroom. The advice is clear, concrete and won't go out of date easily. It is as useful as a guide to other sources as it is in giving information and advice. The lists of references for each chapter are the bibliography for the course. It is Canadian and a bargain.

We think, therefore, that you should buy it. We will be using the first part of the book in our class discussions and will ask for your reactions to other chapters in the book.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Course outline – *continued* –

EVALUATION:

There are **two** major components of evaluation in this course.

The **first** component involves your successful mastery of each item in the Master Check List, keeping the group log and responding to the textbook. A sample of the list accompanies this handout. Please note that it may be modified according to what we are able to do and what your requirements as learners are. Some negotiation may, therefore, be possible or inevitable in the light of our experiences. For each major component of the list more detailed criteria will be discussed and decided on, then assessed as you engage in and complete the assignments of the course. Mastery of the first component **and** submission of the second component will constitute a grade of B.

The **second** component is a portfolio which you will submit at the end of the course. The portfolio may be either physical or electronic in form and consist of your completed Master Check List and a minimum of four items selected by you. Make the portfolio, in its physical appearance, something you are proud of and want to keep. Accompanying your selections should be an explanation (about 1 page in length) of why you chose to include each piece of work and what it reveals about your ability or development in the course. Your selection may include pieces that were not successful, but were helpful in causing you to think and giving you a sense of direction for future work. Four of the selections should come from one of each of the major areas the course covers: Technology in learning, especially the digital technologies you have learned about it in the course; Media Literacy; and Technology as a problem-solving process. The fifth selection should be a short paper (approxima-tely 5 pages) showing your understanding of the broader issues about technology raised in the course and describing your personal stance on the approach to and the use of media and technology in your classroom.

In addition to the above, we would like you to evaluate your progress in the course, giving yourself a Grade from B to A. This, too, needs an explanation, much of which will come out of your discussion of the selection of the pieces in your portfolio. As your instructors, we reserve the right to agree/disagree with your self-assessment and to award the final grade for the course.

Dr. Winston Emery, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies, McGill University, has had experience in all aspects of professional media production. He currently teaches English Language Arts Curriculum and Instruction and Media Education to both pre-service and graduate teachers.

Note: **Part 2 will appear in the next issue of Media Focus .*

YNN tries again

It seems like déja-vu— a *Media Focus* headline that features Youth News Network. Even the players are the same—Rod Macdonald and his illusive team of sponsors, advisors and clients squaring off with their detractors.

The claims are the same —YNN will shower participating schools with state of the art equipment and quality media education programming and teaching materials, all in exchange for the guarantee that 90% of the school population will watch the daily 10-minute "news" program and 2 minutes of advertising produced by YNN.

History: YNN in Quebec

For those new to the topic, a brief history is in order. YNN was modelled on Chris Whittle's Channel One project in the U.S. After attempting to penetrate schools in other parts of Canada, YNN first appeared in Quebec in 1992, at the height of the media education movement here. Although small in number, media education enthusiasts in the Montreal area had formed a strong alliance to make media education a reality amongst teachers and parents. By 1992 the Ministry of Education of Quebec (MEQ) had recognized the value of media education and formed a Media Education Committee to develop a curriuculum. Word was spreading slowly, and more and more teachers were beginning to listen.

Enter YNN with their grandiose project and promises of cameras, VCRs, satellite dishes and instant media literacy for

participating schools. All they asked in exchange was the opportunity to beam ten minutes of "news" supported by two minutes of advertising into their classrooms.

The plan, although too good to pass up for some, was too good to be true for others who were skeptical of the motives and outcomes. Critics accused Macdonald of using schools to serve the corporate agenda. They also questioned the content and challenged claims that the project would promote media literacy. They argued that media education is the result of teacher training combined with thoughtful curricula and solid research. Equipment alone, they stressed, was not the answer. YNN and the school boards were also criticized for not consulting parents.

Macdonald's supporters countered that YNN was not unique in bringing commercialism into the classroom. They added that YNN was a practical solution to provincial education budget cuts. YNN would give school boards equipment not otherwise available.

In retrospect, we see an irony in YNN's 1992 campaign. Their presence had an unexpected impact in Quebec. Although they did not succeed in wiring local schools, they did mobilize people and raise awareness of media education. Thanks to YNN, an open debate on the issue began. Several large meetings were organized, including a public forum on commercial advertising in the classroom at The Centre for Literacy in October 1992 when 80 people turned out for a panel on the pros and cons of YNN. In the winter of 1993, a large group of parents and teachers met at the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal to hear Macdonald promote YNN; the project was openly criticized by most and supported by a few.

One of the most valuable lessons we have learned from the YNN experience is that cameras, computers and satellite dishes are only tools, and tools are only as effective as the individuals who understand them. We must continue to look to ourselves as we bring media education to our young people.

Positive fallout

Unable to substantiate YNN's claims about advertisers and members of its Advisory Committee, Macdonald was losing momentum and potential funding. By 1994, YNN was no longer a threat here. In fact, we owed much to Rod Macdonald.

The discussion initiated around YNN continued and expanded. The Centre for Literacy hosted two major media education conferences in 1993 and 1994; the Academic Alliance of English Teachers and The Centre for Literacy and McGill University held a number of workshops on media education; McGill Faculty of Education, offered a Graduate Summer Institute on media education. Most important, the new interest paved the way for reception of *Media Files*, the curriculum for media education at the secondary level produced by the MEQ. This valuable resource, released in 1995, has been praised by experts around the world.

This is not to say that none of this would have happened without YNN, but YNN was the issue that galvanized teachers and parents, making them more aware of media education as an important element of the education process.

Fast forward - 1997

We assumed that YNN was a thing of the past. We were wrong. Macdonald and YNN have been attempting to make a comeback. After trying to win over schools in Ontario and New Brunswick, there are now rumblings that Laurenval School Board in Quebec has signed on, and that YNN will be broadcasting its programs there. Again, we are not certain if and when this will happen. Attempts to get the facts result in vague answers and little information. Macdonald is back with his shell game, dropping names of advertisers, backers, supporters and clients, but unable to substantiate these claims. Things are never quite as YNN report them to be. In that way, too, little has changed since 1993.

In another way, a great deal has changed. In the past three years, access to technology has allowed a strong network of interested parties to communicate regularly via e-mail and to share information in ways we could not before. Several people across the country have been working tirelessly to stay on Macdonald's heels and sometimes even to get one step ahead of him. They send out information as they get it, allowing the rest of us to plan our next moves. We owe much to them, as the task is frustrating and exhausting.

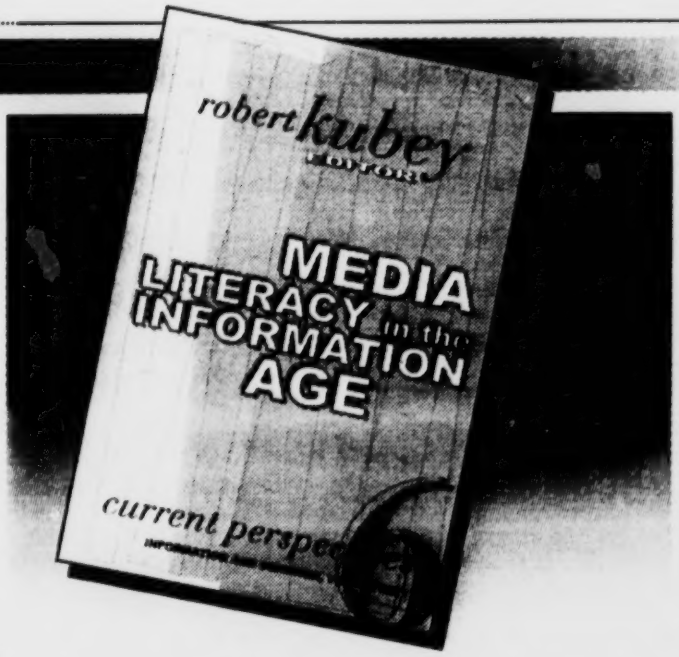
No one can predict what will happen next. However, we are far better prepared to resist YNN now than we were three years ago. In Canada, we have taken our place alongside media educators in other parts of the world. We accomplished this on our own merit without YNN. As for resources, that scenario has not improved. We continue to experience the pain of reduced budgets and shrinking resources. Despite this, we must never look to YNN to bring media education to our schools.

One of the most valuable lessons we have learned from the YNN experience is that cameras, computers and satellite dishes are only tools, and tools are only as effective as the individuals who understand them. We must continue to look to ourselves as we bring media education to our young people. We must also be proud of the progress we have made in doing so. [See Teacher Training, p .4] (JB)

REVIEWS

Media Literacy in the Information Age

ed. Robert Kubey, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1997, 468 pp.



So much has been written about media education in such a relatively short period that any attempt to synthesize the works of the major players in the field is truly a daunting undertaking. Robert Kubey has taken on this challenge and the result is an anthology of writings entitled *Media Literacy in the Information Age*.

This collection is Volume Six in the *Information and Behaviour Series*, edited by Brent D. Ruben and begun in 1983 before many of the contributors and editors had a true sense of how drastically information and behaviour would influence each other. Fourteen years ago, few of us had any notion of how the communciation process would be changed by new directions in media and technology. Few of us could have conceived of electronic messages reaching so many people in so many places in such a short period of time. Nor could we have predicted that all of this would impact so strongly on so many aspects of our lives.

The past fourteen years have brought about fundamental changes in how we define the communication process. Changes have also come about in how we define words like "literacy," "information" and "text." Kubey's collection of articles in this volume helps the reader to trace how definitions of these words and concepts have changed and how they relate to one another.

An international perspective

The book, divided into five parts, presents a number of perspectives. The first part provides a brief historical overview of media education and includes chapters by Len Masterman and Cary Bazelgette of Britain and Patricia Aufderheide of the U.S. Part II highlights theoretical frameworks and concepts of media education with contributions by Canadians Jacques Piette and Luc Giroux, and Renee Hobbs and Paul Messaris of the U.S. These chapters begin to stretch definitions by dealing with the media as texts and visual literacy. Part III deals with specific issues in specific countries. Readers get accounts of the media education experience in Australia, Israel, England and South Africa.

Part IV is, perhaps, the section which will interest most teachers, for it deals with curriculum and research— issues at the heart of media education. David Considine of the U.S. makes some compelling arguments for media education to be taught across the curriculum and points to the need for major reform in U.S. schools to enable the process. He also talks about the need to identify and overcome barriers to media education and to address the needs of those who embrace media literacy. No doubt, media education enthusiasts everywhere will relate to many of these issues.

Two chapters deal with media education and the future. David Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green of the U.K. write about multimedia and the age of the digital culture, while Australians Robyn Quin & Barrie McMahon explore media education in the 21st century. Quin and McMahon stress the importance of including the new technologies with the press, film and TV. This inspiring chapter argues that curriculum approaches to media education be prepared for the 21st century. This part of the book concludes with chapters by Roger Desmond of the U.S. and Tamar Liebes of Israel.

Part V refreshingly focuses on a dimension which is rarely included in discussions of media literacy — computers and the electronic society. For several years this has been a missing element of the discourse of media education, so Kubey's decision to include it in this anthology is an important one. Contributors include Canadians W. Lambert Gardiner and Micheline Prenette, both of Montreal, and Americans Charles R. McClure and Carol C. Kuhlthau.

Media Literacy in the Information Age is a valuable resource for researchers and teachers looking for a very broad perspective on media education. Although it deals largely in theory, contributors write in styles which are accessible and interesting. (JB)

Media Literacy in the Information Age is available for borrowing at The Centre for Literacy